

WHO IS KRISHNA ?

BY

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PREFACE

THE wide atmosphere of Indian religious thought is scattered all over with drifting mists of ideas relating to Krishna. One without proper information is apt to be perplexed when all sorts of contradictory statements reach one's ears concerning Krishna's history or romance. Every Indian, whatever be his caste or creed, any one who travels or sojourns in India, is sure to hear over and over again of Krishna, worshipped, loved, realised, discoursed on, or alluded to in diverse ways. The question naturally arises in every mind as to *Who is Krishna*, what is the *fact* about him, what is the meaning of all that which is recounted of him.

In these pages some sort of reply to this question has been offered. It may be sufficient for a casual querist and provoke the thinker and the man of religion on to investigation or disquisition broader and deeper. It is a vast subject unlimited in its scope, a subject which may fill many volumes. No regular treatment of any particular phase of it has here been proposed. A slight attempt has been made (1) to show the naturalness of the conception of Krishna as well as its universality, (2) to

indicate the realism and the deep humanity of the Krishna scriptures, (3) to give some idea of the permanent and pervading influence of the divine Person on the life of the ancient as well as the modern Hindus, and (4) to give a simple account of the ideas and thoughts that work in the mind of those who profess and practise the religion of Krishna.

The want of organic concentration to be noticed by an intelligent reader in what is presented in this little book is due to the nature of its peculiar purpose and also to the fact that it was written with what may be called unceremonious precipitance without any idea whatsoever of publication. Here I should not forget to mention that in connection with the present work I am indebted to my friends and colleagues Babu Benimadhav Agarwala, M.A., who wanted with insistence that I should say something about Krishna on the last *Janmastami* day, and Babu Siddheswar Prasad Sinha, M.A., who took great trouble in arranging a meeting for delivering it as a public lecture.

Bihar Sharif

KSHETRA LAL SAE

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नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

WHO IS KRISHNA ?

1

THE GREAT SYNTHESIS

THE word *Krishna* sums up the truths of all the Philosophies of the world. Krishna is the quintessence of the vast and multifarious life of mankind. He is on the other hand the spirit of the little life of every individual, every man, every beast, every bird, every butterfly. He is the soul of all beauties, physical, moral and spiritual. He is the spirit of all goodness, all righteousness. He is the basis of all the interentangling problems which make up the universe of Thought.

Krishna is absolute Divinity. Krishna is the tiny helpless babbling baby playing on the mother's lap. Krishna is MAN, Superman and God according to the difference of the divine aspect considered. He is Real. He is Ideal. He is

Concrete. He is Abstract. He is Historical. He is Legendary. He is the Starting-ground of all legends and myths. He is the Fact of all facts; indeed all facts are mere legends when viewed in the eternal light of Krishna. He is the central soul of the Indian Religion. He is the ultimate spirit of all the Religions of the world. He is the greatest determinant of Indian History. He is the mighty Sun round whom the brilliant spheres, social, political and religious, of the firmament of Indian life have always revolved and do still revolve.

There are who say that Krishna was a great Man. They are right. He was a Man who lived, moved and had his being on the sacred soil of India. He was born and brought up, grew up to the man's state and had his relations and friends and wives and children. He performed magnificent deeds, undertook astonishing adventures and achieved wonderful successes. He was a great warrior, a far-seeing statesman, and a prudent politician. He was a poet and a philosopher. He was the shaper of the destiny of a mighty nation. We have got his eventful biography in a hundred different forms.¹ There are who maintain that Krishna is an Incarnation of God. There is

¹ That is when Krishna assumed humanity upon himself and entered the sphere of time and history and manifested himself to the world of mankind. He *thus* appears in all the worlds of the Universe in succession. Otherwise, as supreme Deity, he lives in the eternal Present.

nothing wrong in the belief. He is an incarnation in some sense or other :

आदित्यानामहं विष्णु ज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।

वृष्णानां वासुदेवोऽस्मि पाण्डवानां धनञ्जयः ॥

गीता—१०।२१, ३७

I am Vishnu among the Adityas, the Sun among all resplendent bodies, Vāsudeva among the descendants of Brishni and Arjun among the Pandavas.

Others hold that he is God Himself and no Incarnation.

एते चांशकलाः पुंसः कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।

The incarnations mentioned are all parts and fragments of Divinity ; Krishna, however, is God Himself.

They speak the truth. Krishna is, above all, God, the Lord of the universe. Where is the saint, where is the philosopher, who is able to comprehend the infinite Truth about Krishna ? You can count the stars of the boundless space, make a reckoning of the granules of sand on the seashore, but you can never finish counting Krishna's attributes :

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।

अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥

गीता—१०।२

न हि ते भगवन् व्यक्तं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ।

स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ॥

गीता—१०।१४, १५

The gods and the celestial sages know nothing of my supreme influence, I am the origin of the gods and the spring of the lives of the divine sages in every way.

O thou of infinite power, neither the gods nor the demons know the process of thy manifestation. Thou knowest thyself, through the perfection of thy divine intelligence, O thou highest of all persons!

There are some who are of opinion that Krishna is an Allegory, that is, he is a creation of the idealising imagination of man, that Krishna is, in the language of Wordsworth,

The gleam,
The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream!

There is truth even in this view. It is a profound truth. The eternal endeavour of the human imagination is to give concrete shapes to the abstract Ideas of Beauty and Truth and Righteousness, to refract the white radiance of the solar light that is infinite into beautiful rainbows and many-tinted clouds of ever-varying colours and forms. These abstract Ideas are a part of the Divine Being of Krishna. The so-called creations too which come out of them, are Krishna in different forms and figures. But the shortsighted man of little intelligence exclaims—can God be a creation of the human mind? He should learn that the creative power in the mind of man which creates these beautiful forms which every one seeks is a ray of Krishna's infinite power. The poet who

works in the minds of the poets of the world is Krishna.

कविं पुराणमनुशासितारम् ।

He is the eternal poet; he rules everything.

The fascinating figures which the poets fashion are Krishna, that is, His fugitive gleams made permanent in finite frames of melodious ideas :

त्वं भक्तियोगपरिभावितहृत्सरोज आस्से श्रुतेक्षितपथो ननु नाथ पुंसां ।

यद् यद्धिया त उरुगाय विभावयन्ति तत् तद्रूपः प्रणयसे सद्गुणहाय ॥

श्रीमद्भागवम्

The *Srimadbhagavat* says :

Thy ways are mysterious. But they can be sought and found with the help of the Vedas. Thou dwellest in the heart as in a fresh-blown lotus, the heart that is free from the contamination of profane passion and is pervaded by divine love. Thou transcendest all perception and thought and art confined to no definitive form. Still on account of thy infinite mercy thou makest thyself manifest by assuming any figure that is desired and contemplated with an enlightened intellect by the devoted adorers of thee.

Krishna frames for himself forms of all kinds to suit the various contemplations of various individuals who give themselves up to Him. There is a beautiful song of Rabindranath Tagore which gives an exquisite expression to this great truth of divine life :

Thou art as a sunset cloud, glowing with brilliant colours, the cherished ideal of all my life's endeavour, the one playful phenomenon of the vacant sky of my being. I have made thee of the loveliness of my sweetest feelings.

I have dyed thy feet red with the blood of my heart, thou presiding deity of my evening dream! I have made thy lips of the composite substance of the poison and nectar of my sorrow and joy mingled in one.

I have painted thine eyes with the collyrium of the vain visions of my love, thou who sportest in the light of my fascinated eye. I have fashioned thy limbs and features with the sweet essence of my songs.

Thou art mine, absolutely mine!¹

This is *creation*. This is idealisation. This is realisation too! This is allegory. This is the meaning of Krishna being on allegory. Otherwise it is mere ignorant prattling. Where there is all-absorbing love dedicated to God, there is a strong creative imagination, for imagination is the very life of emotion.

¹ Literally translated from the original Bengali.

II

A CONTRADICTION

BUT who is Krishna? Krishna is *that* God whom alone a man or a spirit or an angel can love with all his heart and soul and the offering of all his being thereby attaining the highest bliss imaginable, the brightest *summum bonum* of life. That Divine He who is the primal originating Impulse that starts the creation, the ultimate Basis and the original Cause of the universe, is Krishna, the eternal harmony of ever-lasting Truth and absolute Intelligence and infinite Bliss, the supreme joy which is Love and Beauty.

ईश्वरः परमः कृष्णः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ।

अनादिशक्तिगोविन्दः सर्वकारणकारणम् ॥

Krishna is the all-ruling God; the Highest of the high, the eternal embodiment of endless existence and perfect intelligence and supreme bliss. He is without a beginning; he is the Origin of everything that is; he is the Light of light; he is the Cause of all causes.

Brahma Sanhita.

That is Krishna. But that is not all. We so often hear the phrase, my God, my Lord, my Beloved, the God *of* the man, *of* the maiden, *of* the bird, *of* the blossom. Over and above the

absolute God, the Lord of creation, the Ruler of the universe, the Omnipotent Deity, over and above this, there is a *personal* God, a private God, so to say, the God of personal possession, the God of the individual heart, the God of the secret feeling of love. This God is Krishna, that is *God when realised in this light is Krishna*. The highest Divinity alone can yield Itself to the heart's embrace of every individual. God is beyond the deepest and the highest comprehension of even the greatest philosopher, a Kapila, a Plato, a Sankara, a Hegel.

द्युपतय एव ते न ययुरन्तमनन्ततया

त्वमपि यदन्तराऽण्डनिचया ननु सावरणाः ।

ख इव रजांसि वान्ति वयसा सह यत् श्रुतय-

स्त्वयि हि फलन्त्यतन्निरसनेन भवनिधनाः ॥

श्रीमद्भागवतम्—१० । ८७ । ४१

Myriads of solar systems are floating down the currents of time like particles of dust in Krishna's boundless Being! The gods and the angels have never been able to measure even a fraction of his endless entity. The Vedas have ransacked the universe of human and superhuman Intelligence, have failed to arrive at a conception of Krishna and have at last been lost in the search.

Srimadbhagavatam.

वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यः ।

वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥

The Vedas, one and all, are to know Me. I am the revealer of the Vedas and their concluding parts. I alone know their real meaning.

This God too is Krishna. But who is the divine Being who responds to the passionate call of a man like Vilwamangal? or a woman like Mirabai? Who is deeply attracted by the magnetic meditation of a little boy like Dhruva? Who yearns for a passing glance of a girl like a milkmaid of Brindaban?

Who is the God who receives every one's offering of a short prayer, or a hymn, or a song, of a sweet emotion of love, of a simple act of adoration, of a fruit, a flower, a leaf, a drop of water? Who is the God who receives these manifold presents of love and is delighted and eager to lead the worshippers and lovers to His realm of eternal Bliss? He is Krishna, the lover of the maiden-souls, the friend of the forlorn.

One of the saintly disciples of Sri-Chaitanya has beautifully expressed this apparent self-contradiction, this inconceivable reconciliation of opposites in the character of the Divine Being. He says:

कं प्रति कथयितुमीशे संप्रति को वा प्रतीतिमायातु ।

गोपतितनयाकुञ्जे गोपवधूटीविटं ब्रह्म ॥

It is so strange! To whom can I say this? Who will believe me? The mighty Lord of the universe is engaged in intrigues of love with young milkmaidens and plays amorous pranks of love with them in the groves on the banks of the Jamuna.

¹ पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ गीता—९ । २६

It is indeed a wonder, a surprise to be sure, disagreeable to many, to hear that God Himself, is in love, in a human fashion, with country girls and sports with them to win them over to Himself. But it is no wonder to the illuminated. He alone is God, the God of the gods and goddesses and angels and archangels and men and women, He alone is God, who does this. The greatest function of his Divinity lies in this. But that is a great problem which is beyond the province of the present discourse which, however, will contain some distant suggestions here and there of its solution.¹

It involves a profound theological truth which is known in all its features only to the Hindus in the world. There are occasional glimpses of it in Christianity. One may try to comprehend it in this way. A young man loves a blooming girl. It is a passing process. But it has an everlasting aspect. Youth and beauty are eternal principles. The young man and the beautiful maiden will cease to be ere long. But youth and beauty are immortal. They are of Krishna, emanations of Krishna's Self. Krishna is, and so Radha is, wherever and whenever there is love and beauty and mutual attraction. Krishna realises himself in all the love-affairs of the world, in all amorous emotions, in all relations of delicious affection. As Krishna he is the lover, as Radha he

¹ The subject is beautifully treated in *Chaitanyacharitamrita*—a great philosophico-biographical work on the life of Lord Chaitanya, written about 1580 by a Vaishnava saint named Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami. Book I, Canto 4.

is the beautiful beloved. In all circumstances it is Krishna who loves and it is Radha who is loved. *This is in the eternal verities of love divested of its mortal vesture.* This is Humanity of Divinity. This is how the Lord of the universe is *assimilated* to man that is a poor creature of His, and man is elevated to a divine state. So Shelley sings:

The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Corresponding with the earthly *phenomena* of love and their spiritual counterparts, there are divine *realities* in the highest domain of love which is in the super-celestial kingdom of Krishna. The terrestrial courses of love are faint reflections or far-off rehearsals of the eternal realities which are however human in their forms though divine or *chinmaya* in essence. This is true of love as well as of every other aspect of life that tends to Truth. The statement

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः

of the Gita contains a far-reaching philosophy. It is easy to talk of the Unity of God, that He is only One. But when it is deeply realised, all sorts of startling truths flash forth and overpower the most philosophical of intellects and tear to tatters many a most fanatically cherished doctrine of religion.

There is a third aspect of the great Truth of Krishna as embodying the universal principle of Love. The subject will be dealt with by-and-by. It has an intimate bearing on the question of the

apparent contradiction in the conception of Krishna. It is this. Krishna is in love with every soul, human or otherwise. It is no metaphor, but a fact. Krishna yearns for every one, exactly as a passionate youth in love yearns for a pretty maiden budding into womanhood. There are thousand obstacles in the way of the consummation of this love. These obstacles are created by the profane sense-life to which the man or the woman is attached. Krishna is kept away by these. He cannot embrace the human spirit, unless there be a stripping-off of the sensual wrappage. He pines and repines. His affliction is eternal. He loves and this is the heavy price he pays for his love. Man does not suffer alone. God suffers with him. How can one love and be selfishly happy at the same time? The crucifixion of Christ proclaims to mankind one of the greatest truths of Divine Life. In spite of the immeasurable difference between man and God, there is no distance separating the one from the other. The designation of Christ as the Son of Man is full of significance. But the truth was variously expressed, realised and embodied by the Hindu Rishis many centuries before the birth of Christ together with a hundred other truths relating to the conception of God. Doctrinal abstraction makes an ocean intervene between man and God. In religious realisation the opposites meet.

III

KRISHNA COMPREHENDS ALL

KRISHNA is not the God of a particular Hindu sect. The God who is the God of universal Man, of every man and every woman, who seeks God and wants to love Him, the same God is Krishna. The Gods of the Religions differ from one another. The God of Christianity is not the same as the God of Islam. The conceptions are different. The Trinity of Christianity is not acknowledged in Islam. The Incarnation of the Messiah, of God, the Son, is regarded as profanity by the Mahomedans. But he whose God is Krishna can easily accept any God of any Religion as his own God, that other God being always a partial conception formed from a great distance of the all-comprehending Krishna. The God of the Bible, the God of the Koran, the God of the Jews, the God of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha and Bodhi-Sattwas of the Buddhists, the Tirthankars of the Jainas, the Fire of those who worship Fire, the Sun of those who adore the Sun, are all comprehended in the profound conception of Krishna. Krishna reconciles and harmonises all the conflicting deities

and divinities of the multitudinous sects and creeds of the world.

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयाऽन्विताः ।

तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।

न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥

गीता—९ । २३-२४

Those who worship other gods with reverence, are devoted to them, worship none but Me though indirectly. I am the Lord of all religious worship and receive and enjoy the substance of all rites and ceremonies. They do not know the essential truth about Me and hence they are led astray.

Gita, IX, 23-24.

You may adore any God, but your adoration is sure to lay itself down at the lotus-feet of Krishna, for all Gods are this-or-that-sided reflection of His. Krishna says :

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

गीता—९ । २९

I regard all beings equally whether animal, human or divine. I have no friend, no foe ; such distinctions are not mine. But I am his, whoever he may be, I am his who loves me, who worships me. I am in him, he is in Me.

Gita, IX, 29.

This is the voice of God. God is every one's. The differences of relation are due to differences of attitude, of the purity of the spirit, of the devotedness of the heart. Krishna is for every

Hindu, every Muslim, every Christian, every Buddhist :

किरातहुनान्ध्रपुलिन्दपुक्कशा आभीरकंका यवनाः शकादयः ।

येऽन्ये च पापा यदपाश्रयाश्रयाः शुच्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥

He may be a savage hunter, a Hun, an Andhra, a Pulinda, a Pukkasha, an Abhira, a Kanka, a Yavana, a Saka; whoever he may be and however sinful be his life, he cannot fail to be purified if he seeks shelter with Krishna.

Srimadbhagavatam.

Lord Buddha is a manifestation of Krishna.

निन्दसि यज्ञविधेरहह श्रुतिजातम् ।

सद्यहृदय दर्शितपशुघातम् ।

केशव धृतबुद्धशरीर जय जगदीश हरे ॥

गीतगोविन्दम्

Krishna's compassionate heart could not justify the practice of animal sacrifice as ordained in some parts of the Vedas. He became Buddha and put a stop to it.

Gita-Govindam.

Lord Christ is an incarnation of Krishna.

The angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying, Joseph, fear not, to take unto thee,

Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.

Gospel of St. Matthew.

This is the Incarnation of the Holy Ghost which means *Paramatma*, who is Krishna, out of whom all *avatars* spring. Krishna is *Paramatma* :

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ।

प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥

I bow down again and again to Krishna, who is the *Soul of all souls* and who removes the sufferings of all who adore him.

The angel, from whom the Prophet Muhammad received his revelation is one of the myriad manifestations or power-radiations of Krishna, so we read in the Gita:

महर्षयः सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा ।

मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमाः प्रजाः ॥

गीता—१० । ६

The four divine saints, the seven primitive sages who came after them, the fourteen Manus, *the many divine personalities* who govern the mental and spiritual dominions of the world, are all embodiments of Krishna's powers, all offspring of His infinite Spirit.

Gita, X, 6.

Muhammad's Angel is one of these divine personalities.¹

¹ The pronouns *we* and *those* in the following passages of the *Koran* (Rodwell's translation):

(1) We parted the sea for you, and saved you, and drowned the people of Pharaoh. (Sura 2.)

(2) And when our decree came to be executed we turned those cities upside down, and we rained down upon them blocks of claystone. (Sura 11.)

(3) Those who conduct the affairs of the universe (Sura 79), certainly mean these *divine personalities*—

मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमाः प्रजाः

'Those who conduct the affairs of the universe' is a brief description of the Hindu gods who are recognised by the Koran under the denomination of angels of whom Gabriel is one. The 'we' in the Koran means *gods*, though 'gods' meaning differently are discarded again and again.

IV

THE HIGHEST POINT-OF-VIEW

THE God of the Israelites, as we read in the *Old Testament* is sympathetic only to themselves. He is hostile in his thoughts and dealings to all other races and communities. The God of Islam is antipathetic towards the non-Muslims of the world. Krishna says :

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

which means that I am of the Muslims and Christians and others as much as of the Hindus. A pious Christian or Muslim is dearer to Krishna than an unrighteous Hindu. There is nothing to be particularly noticed in this. It is as it should be. But Krishna as He is worshipped in India, differs from the Gods of the religions in certain fundamental aspects of Divinity, though He comprises all the Gods of all Mankind. The conception of God as Krishna is the only conception in the world which includes, adjusts, organises and brings into harmony the contradictory conceptions of God which are current among mankind. He who worships Krishna as the highest Divinity and who

is acquainted with the outlines of the spiritual and divine Truth involved in the name of Krishna, is the only person who is able to do justice to all religions, to honour and rightly estimate all the worshippers of all the Gods in the world. The Christian will never understand the Muslim or the Hindu. The Muslim will never understand the Hindu or the Christian, The Hindu who knows Krishna will never misunderstand the Muslim or the Christian or the Buddhist or any one of any creed. This is a most significant fact. All the tenets and doctrines of all the religions of the world, all divine revelations, all spiritual principles are easily and naturally intelligible to all who worship Krishna and know something of the scriptures concerning Him. He who takes his stand on Mt. Everest, the highest Himalayan Peak, is able to command a view of the mountains and valleys and hills and dales of twenty different countries stretching far and wide in all directions. He whose religion consists in the adoration of Krishna has got the perspective that enables him to survey and discern even the most secret truths and the deepest mysteries of every religion. In fact no religion has got any mystery for the Hindu, nothing which can defeat his *understanding* intellectual or spiritual. None but a Hindu is able to *appreciate* all religious attitudes, all spiritual mentality. The Vaishnava religion intimately relates to those inmost and eternal functions of the human mind the satisfaction of

which immediately leads to the satisfaction of all its other functions and faculties. Krishna is the God of the man whom we can call elemental or universal or natural-supernatural: of him who is above the conditions and conventions of artificial society and dogmatising religion. It is the endeavour of every one to attain to such a state. So Krishna is the God of every one knowingly or unknowingly.

God is One, and absolutely One.

एकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।

But this does not mean that He is only one Power or one Aspect only. His powers are countless. His aspects have no end. He is absolute *Existence*, absolute *Intelligence* and absolute *Bliss*. He is creator, preserver and destroyer. He is the material cause of the universe. He is the soul of every man and every woman, every god and every goddess. He is the Father, the Mother and Lover of Mankind. He is the Lord of the universe. He is conscience. He is the moral sense. He is the spirit of religion. He is providence. He is salvation. He is eternal Happiness. He is the Master of the destinities of beings. He is the dread Judge of the actions of mankind, of their virtues and vices. He is the Dispenser of all punishments and rewards. He is the Sky. He is the Sea. He is the Universal Nature in whole and in part. He is Learning, and Wisdom, and Energy and Virtue and

Prosperity and Life and Death. In all these He is no abstract principles or empty qualities. He is concrete *living persons* in being all these. These are gods and goddesses :

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराणस्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।

वेतासि वेद्यं च परं च धाम त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥

वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुणः शशांकः प्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।

गीता—११ । ३८-३९

Thou art the primordial God of all gods; thou art the ever-living Person; thou art the ultimate foundation of this universe; thou knowest everything and thou art the only Thing to be known; thou art supreme substance; thou pervadest the multiform universe. Thou art the God of wind, of Death, of the sea, of the moon, thou art the Lord of Creation and the Father of the originators of mankind.

कालः स्वभावः सदसन्मनश्च द्रव्यं विकारो गुण इन्द्रियाणि ।

स्वर्लोकपालाः खगलोकपालाः नृलोकपाला स्तललोकपालाः ।

गन्धर्वविद्याधरचारणेशा ये रक्षो यक्षोरगनागनाथा ।

ये ऋषीणा मृषभाः पितृणां दैत्येन्द्रसिद्धेश्वरदानवेन्द्राः ॥

श्रीमद्भागवतम्—२६ । ४२-४३

Thou art the all-regulating Time; thou art the essential nature of all things and all beings; thou art that which is manifest and that which is not manifested; thou art the basis of all substances; thou art the principle of change; thou art the attribute of attributes; thou art the sense of senses. The lords of the third heaven, the masters of the region of the winged animals, the supreme authorities of the world of men, the chiefs of the nether regions, the rulers of the Gandharvas, the Bidyadharas, the Charanas, the

leaders of the Rakshasas, the Yakshas, the serpents and reptiles, the greatest of the sages and of the celestial fathers, the kings of the demons, the Siddhas, and Danavas, are all of Krishna, in Krishna and Krishna's Self.

The infinitude of the Divine Being comprises all these persons and principles. These are the integral powers and forces, the supersensuous elements of the stupendous scheme of the many-worlded universe. And Krishna in his immutable unity is in all these.

KRISHNA LOVES

BUT has he exhausted himself in manifesting himself in these universal beings and entities. No; His integrity is intact beyond all these. His eternal transcendence is independent of his eternal immanence:

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगद्व्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
 मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥
 न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।
 भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥
 यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान् ।
 तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥

गीता—९।४-६

My unmanifested Self pervades all universe. All beings, all things are in Me. I am not in them. Nay, they are not in Me; behold, this is the mystery of my supreme power. I contain all lives, but I am not in them. My spirit is the ultimate support of all beings. As the boundless and pervading air is in the sky, so all that exist are in Me. Try to comprehend this.

That God who is above and beyond all universal relations, He who is the origin and basis of the

Gods of the worlds and their religions, He whose eternal independence is inviolable, He who is all perfection, supreme intelligence, supreme Light, Love, Loveliness and Beauty ineffable, is Krishna, the God of all Gods! But the most astonishing feature of the divine character of Krishna is that inspite of his inconceivable splendour and magnificence, inspite of all his supremacy, he loves to actually live with every one, to hover about every life, to trace every foot-step, to hanker after every movement of the feeling of love in every being. Krishna is the eternal beggar of love, the ever-lasting suppliant for the alms of affection. His thirst for love is insatiable. He is passionately fond of every one. He burns with ardent eagerness to love. His sorrow and suffering are infinite. He is every moment suffering with the suffering of humanity. He cannot avoid it because he loves and his nature is all love. He is following every one like a shadow. But every one is forgetful of Him. Every human soul is Krishna's dearest darling. He is eternally yearning for union of love with her. But she keeps herself covered up in intricate layers of the dark life of sense and does never think that it is so. He who loves her with all his soul is Krishna and He has been waiting at her door for millions of years.

This is Krishna in his suffering for mankind. We hear and also say that God is love. Few

know the deep meaning of the saying. Here is some suggestion of its meaning. Krishna who is love and beauty in embodiment, in his yearning for love and beauty, has created the universe. The truth is that the universe has its evolution in the processes of Krishna's love. There is no such thing as creation in the human sense. God's creation is spontaneous evolution.

We see that a man has a household, a domestic establishment. How has it come into existence? It has sprung from love. A young man falls in love with a blooming maiden. This is the beginning. Then there is the process called courtship. The two hearts know each other. Then comes the wedding, then the house, the equipments, the family, the relations, the troubles, the pleasures. The universe with all its complexities came into existence because Krishna wanted to love. The blessings of life are expressions of love; the curses are its negations. All virtue, righteousness, compassion, benevolence, amity, amiability, happiness, well-being, everything desirable in life are multifarious expressions of the spirit of love.

In the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* we read that the universe will become a corpse in a day if it be forsaken by the spirit of love :

जीवन्मृतञ्च विश्वं च शवतुल्यं यया विना ।

This spirit of love is a conjugate personality, a beautiful pair of splendour :

राधा कृष्णप्रणयविकृतिर्ह्लादिनी शक्तिरस्मात् ।
एकात्मनावपि भुवि पुरा देहभेदं गतौ तौ ॥

Radha is an embodiment of Krishna's inmost *Character* of love, that universal power which is the source of his own everlasting delight and of the delight of the world. Radha and Krishna are one in their essence of being. They have assumed two bodies, but still one in spirit. Love requires this Dualism. The unmanifested absolute Self-involved Krishna is Brahma. The infinite Radiance of blank whiteness that surrounds the person of Krishna is also called Brahma :

यद्वैतं ब्रह्मोपनिषदि तदप्यस्य तनुभा ।

He is eternally abiding in those infinite regions of splendour and beauty and love which are called Golak, Vaikuntha, Brindaban, Mathura and Dwaraka, all beyond the universe of Maya, and other regions of different planes of spiritual excellence.

चिन्तामणिप्रकरसद्म सुकल्पवृक्षलक्षावृतेषु सुरभिं परिपालयन्तं ।
लक्ष्मीसहस्रशतसंभ्रमसेव्यमानम् गोविन्दमादि पुरुषं तमहं भजामि ॥

ब्रह्मसंहिता

He abides in the realm which is made all of a wonderful thought-substance, called *Chintamani*, and which is covered with innumerable immortal trees and creepers which produce the fruits of all desires. He is served day and night by thousands of the goddesses of beauty and prosperity known as *Lakshmis*.

Brahma-Sanhita.

आनन्दचिन्मयरसप्रतिभाविताभि स्ताभिर्य एव निजरूपतया कलाभिः ।
गोलोक एव निवसत्यखिलात्मभूतः गोविन्दमादिपुरुषं तमहं भजामि ॥

ब्रह्मसंहिता

The realm is called Golak where he lives with supercelestial damsels who are embodied radiations of, and suffused all over with, the love, which is the essence of his beatific joy, that which is the essence of his self-consciousness. He is the soul of all souls.

Brahma-Sanhita.

Here he lives and plays his never-ending Lila of Love with millions of fascinating maidens all aglow with the sweetest and the brightest of emotions. They are the personified radiations of his own spirit of Love called *Hladini*. As the Lord of one of these regions called *Parabyom*, he originates the *incarnations*, or *avatars* of all degrees of power and authority and sends them forth to the worlds with their respective missions for the amelioration of the conditions of mankind. Sri-Ram Parusha-Ram, Nrisinha, Vamana, Vyasa, Prithu, Rishava, Kapila, Buddha, Kalki and a hundred others are these avatars. Christ is one of them.¹ Every divinity has a certain function to perform in the universal order of creation. They cannot become Incarnations. Thus Brahmâ or Indra cannot come to the world as an Incarnation because he has not the power or the freedom to do it having an

¹ In Christianity Christ is in fact God Himself being His Incarnation. The Koran vehemently opposes this view. There is perfect justification of the view of the Divinity of Christ in Hinduism.

appointed duty to perform. Krishna alone is independent of all orders and systems. All Incarnations are His. An *Avatar* is a sort of a ripple rising on the ocean of Krishna's love and wisdom. This endless expanse of love and wisdom is Krishna's alone and no one else's.

VI

KRISHNA IN NATURE

KRISHNA is Brahma, the Absolute. Krishna is Love and Light and Beauty incarnate. Krishna is the Lord of the celestial regions. Krishna is the originating source of the Avatars. Krishna is the personal divinity of every individual human life. And lastly He is the indwelling spirit of universal nature whom Wordsworth has revealed to the Europeans and has clothed in such deep and splendid verses :

I have felt
A presence *** a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of the setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky ***
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still ***

O'er all that leaps and runs and shouts and sings
Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And the mighty depth of waters.

Apparently nature is a creation of physical forces.
Krishna is spirit transcendental. But the blind

physical forces of nature are intelligently guided by spiritual forces which work through and within them. So the universe is interpenetrated by the reflections of Krishna's love and beauty. The longings of Krishna's eternal love, his radiant desires for beauty express themselves in what we call beauties of nature.

The English poet Gray has sung :

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The poet was wrong in making this statement. The bashful and loving flower blushes indeed, but is not unseen. Its sweetness is not wasted. It blooms for Krishna's pleasure. Krishna enjoys it and takes delight in its sweetness. There is a purpose in the blowing of the flower. It is to satisfy Krishna's desire for beauty. It is no poetic fancy. It is a truth revealed by the deepest meditation of the pure-hearted saints. So Wordsworth says :

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

So we find in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* :

बनलतास्तरव आत्मनि विष्णुं व्यञ्जयन्त इव पुष्पफलाढ्याः ।
प्रणतभारविट्पामधुधाराः प्रेमहृद्यतनवो ववृषुः स्म ॥

Translated into English verse it is :

The silvan trees and creepers soft,
Enriched with fruits and flowers fair,
And branches bent their wealth to bear,
Feeling thrills of passions oft,

Betoken Vishnu dwelling in,
The spirit pervading all that is,
And showering in their ecstasies,
Nectar'd joy and beauty's sheen.

The immeasurable bosom of nature is overflowing with ever-varying beauty and loveliness numberless in their forms and expressions. Who will collect the flowers that bloom every day in the gardens, meadows, parks, woods and forests of the earth ? Who will delineate their delicate combination of finely tinted petals, sepals, anthers and pistils ? Where is the poet who can describe the millions of colours and tinges quickly melting into one another in the cloud-besprinkled evening sky plundering the treasure-house of the splendours of the sun ? Who will measure the wealth of beauty which is manifest in the bright and gaudy plumes of the birds. Is there any end to the beauties of the mountains and woodlands ? The ever-lasting bright blue of the sky, the glorious arch of the rainbow, the flowing dance of the fountain, the ever-swinging blue-black expanse of the sea—what do they reflect ? The loveliness of the boy, the sweetness of the girl, the charms of the blossoming maiden—do they not make up a boundless paradise of beauty on the face of the earth ? All these are multiform impressions caught from the dainty limbs of Krishna—remote radiations of the resplendence of his love, glistening through the inmost heart of nature on her visible surfaces. Nay, they are the *apparent* reflections

of the ever-lasting play of love on the physical plane, of the eternal pair, of Radha and Krishna ! Nature is *material*, *panc'habhoutik*, but her beauties are all spiritual. He who has his spiritual consciousness awakened in him knows how to separate these beauties and graces from their physical forms and their material counterparts.¹ Krishna is revealed to him who practises this process of elimination. These beauties are of Krishna, Krishna and for the enjoyment of Krishna. That smile on the lips of the girl, the love-laden glance stealing from the bashful eye of the bride, that musical voice, that graceful pose, that elegant movement of this or that youthful woman, you praise, you wonder at, you dream of !—that is of no avail, foolish perturbation of the mind. Shake off that sensuous attitude ; contemplate it in a spirit of pure and simple adoration of supersensuous beauty—that glance, that grace, that loveliness

¹ To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
I gave a moral life : I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling, the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I behold respired with inward meaning.

WORDSWORTH'S *Prelude*, Book III

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring !
Even yet thou art to me,
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery.

WORDSWORTH'S *Cuckoo*.

This is how Wordsworth has separated the physical form from the spiritual truth.

will pass on to their proper place in the person of Radha, the eternal queen of love and beauty. Here it is momentary, there it is ever-lasting.

देवी कृष्णमयी प्रोक्ता राधिका परदेवता ।

सर्वलक्ष्मीमयी सर्वकान्तिः सम्मोहिनी परा ॥

Radha is filled full of Krishna. She is the supreme Deity in its feminine aspect. She has sprung from the concentrated essence of all the beauties and graces which are in the universe. She is all fascination. No beauty can excel hers.

Brihad-Gautamiya-Tantra.

Krishna is transcendental. His supreme abode is beyond the Empire of Nature called *Prakriti*. But He is immanent too. He is everywhere in the world. As a lovable spirit He is in my heart. As a yearning lover He is always hovering about me. To love Him is to enter on the plane of eternal bliss. Moksha or salvation, *Sarupya*, *Sayujya*, *Salokya*, is nothing beside the blessed disposition to love Him :

मयि भक्तिर्हि भूतानाममृतत्वाय कल्पते ।

Love and devotion to Me is immortality itself.

The earth knows not herself in ecstasies of joy when she is touched by the dainty feet of Krishna while sporting in the woods :

किं ते कृतं क्षिते तपोवत केशवांग्रिस्पर्शोत्सवोत्पुलकितान्नरुहैर्विभासि ।

श्रीमद्भागवतम्

The milkmaidens of Brindaban ask the trees and creepers of the forest to show them the secret paths of Krishna. The wild hinds, on hearing the melody of Krishna's flute, feels delighted, are attracted to him, come near, and worship him with their wistful looks. Flights of happy birds flutter overhead and eagerly express their joy in harmonious warblings when Krishna comes home in the evening after his pleasant rambles in the woodlands.

To speak more specifically Nature represents on a physico-spiritual plane an Aspect of Radha, who is an embodiment of Krishna's consciousness of Love and Beauty. As such she is ever engaged in unfolding ever-varying beauties which are without end in order to satisfy Krishna's insatiable thirst for beauty. Krishnadas Kaviraj-Goswami while giving exquisite descriptions of the natural beauties of Brindaban in his *Govinda-Lilamritam*, expresses the idea in a most definite way—

The fair woodlands of Brindaban are a reflection of the lovely person of Radha.

In the sixth canto of the Poem we find when Krishna enters into the wide woods in the morning with his friends and cows and calves, the creeping plants are all awake, the trees are in blossom, the animals frolick about, the birds warble their pleasure, the bees fly murmuring about the flowers, the peacocks spread their gorgeous plumes and dance with ecstasy and all nature is alive and aglow with the influence of an all-pervading spirit of joy. In the

absence of Krishna she was faint and faded and almost destitute of life. Now she is kindled with life and eager to welcome Krishna and delight his heart. She is full of happiness and desires to adore him with charming presents of the same. Her smiles manifest in flowers, her songs in the warblings of birds, dances in the dancing leaves, delicious drinks in the honey that is in flowers, and dainty dessert in the fruits, are offerings of worship with which she entertains her Beloved. When the large-eyed does come to Krishna and fawn on him, he remembers the love-laden eyes of Radha. When the peacocks and pea-hens dance about him, their extended plumes put him in mind of Radha's profuse locks of hair. In the chirpings of the sparrows he seems to hear the jinglings of her bracelets. The sounds of the cranes resemble the tinklings of her anklets. The fragrant lotuses are in bloom. Black bees are flitting round and round about them. They remind him again and again of the sweetly smiling face of his beloved Radha with her restless eyes and dark eye-lashes. Branches are bent with ripe pomegranates, oranges and apples. They reflect her delicate breasts. Krishna's quick glances run in all directions and everywhere he catches glimpses of Radha's beauties. His heart quivers with joy as he finds every object of nature astir with a living passion of love.

Raghunathdas Goswami, one of the saintly companions of Sri Chaitanya, in his *Muktâ Charitam*

conceives of nature in a similar way. He says the golden jasmines have got a touch of Radha's beauteous person. The *champak*-flowers reflect a ray of her radiant complexion. The fresh-blown lotus vainly endeavours to imitate the loveliness of her fascinating face. The *bimba*-fruit and the *bandhuli*-flower are of the tinge of her ruddy lips. The tender twining plants are living similes of her soft and rounded arms. The sesame flower speaks of her sharp-shaped nose. The silvan flowers are her sweetest smiles fixed into fragrant forms. Her eye-brows are two rows of black-bees sitting on two twinkling flowers.

When in the *Chhandogyopanishat* we come across such passages as

अत्राणि संलवन्ते स हिंकारो मेघो जायते स प्रस्तावो ।

वर्षति स उद्गीथो विद्योतते स्तनयति स प्रतीहारः ।

उद्गृह्णाति तन्निधान मेतद्वै रूपं पर्जन्ये प्रोतम् ।

The vapours rack in the sky and come together. It is a divine truth called *Hinkara*. The clouds form: it is also a divine truth called *Prastava*; they pour down as profuse showers of rain. It is another called *Udgiitha*. They flash and mutter. It is a fourth called *Pratihara*. The water percolates through the earth. It is a fifth called *Nidhana*. All are processes of divine energy.

we feel that the Rishis are getting glimmerings of the Divine in nature which distinctly move in the direction of Krishna, but the time for the definite conception of him has not yet come. The

clear realisation is to be met with in the Puranas in such expressions as,

नौमीढ्य तेऽभ्रवपुषे तडिदम्बराय ।

I bow to thee, Krishna, who have the blue cloud for thy body and the lustrous lightning for thy garment.

In the same Upanishad we read :

अथ य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुषो दृश्यते हिरण्यश्मश्रु हिरण्यकेश-
आप्रणाखात्सर्व एव सुवर्णः ।

A person is visible in the inmost part of the Sun. He is all golden. His *beard* is gold. His hair is gold. Everything is gold of him from the head to the tip of the toe.

The conception reaches its full development in the Puranas,

ध्येयस्सदा सवित्रमण्डलमध्यवर्ती नारायणः सरसिजासनसन्निविष्टः ।
केयूरवान् कनककुण्डलवान् किरीटी हारी हिरण्मयवपुर्धृतशंखचक्रः ॥

In the resplendent sphere of the sun, there is a lotus. Krishna sits on it as Narayan. There is a golden crown on his head, and golden ornaments on his arms and ears. He wears a garland on his breast. He holds a conch-shell, a disc, a mace and a lotus in his four hands. His person is made all of gold.

A certain chapter of the *Chhandogyopanishat* begins with the following line,

श्यामाच्छवलं प्रपद्ये श्वलाच्छयामं प्रपद्ये । ८ । १३

Apart from the meanings of the commentators, it yields a very simple meaning:

We pass from the green-complexioned Krishna on to the multifarious Nature and from it we come back to, and rest in Him.

This significant statement may be regarded as the key to the question of the relation of nature with Krishna.

VII

KRISHNA IN THE WORLD'S LITERATURE

I HAVE said every one worships Krishna distantly or mistakingly or unwittingly. I know of a few of the wisest and most free-hearted men of the world outside India who actually and intimately knew Krishna or Radha or both and dedicated their lives to their adoration. They are the man who conceived and composed the *Song of Solomon* in the *Old Testament*, Dante, the greatest Italian poet, Swedenborg, the celebrated Swedish philosopher and saint, and Shelley, the great English poet, the greatest poet of the spiritual world. A big book can be written on this subject. My statements will not carry conviction until I break up considerable portions of their works and bring out their main significance. But that is impossible here. I will content myself with one or two references.

The so-called *Song of Solomon* is the passionate expression of the ardent love of a maiden, who according to the orthodox interpretation of the Christians, is the personification of the church. This love is for a lovely youth whose heart overflows with love and whose person shines with

KRISHNA IN THE WORLD'S LITERATURE 39

ineffable beauty. Christians think that this is the immortal spirit of Christ in whose

Face, divine compassion visibly appears,
Love without end and without measure grace,
Unexampled love, * * *
Love nowhere to be found less than divine.

Paradise Lost, III, 140-42, 410-11.

The lovely youth thus speaks of the beloved maiden :

There are threescore queens and fourscore
concubines and virgins without number. My
dove, my undefiled is but one * * * The daughters
saw her and blessed her ; yea, the queens and the
concubines and they praised her.

Then again :

Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine
eyes * * *

How much better is thy love than wine ! * * *
Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb.

Honey and milk are under thy tongue.
A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse,
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

When Christ or whoever the lover may be, speaks in this strain of the *Church* or the loving spirit of man in relation to God, the matter differs from Krishna-Lila in nothing but the name. The maiden says :

I am my beloved's
And his desire is toward me.
Come, my beloved, * * *
Let us get up early to the vine-yards * * *
There I will give thee my loves.

When a religion conceives the relation of the human soul to God in this fashion, it becomes something of Vaishnavism, call it Christianity or Islam, or anything. Every word of the *Song of Solomon* vibrates with the spirit of what is called *Ragamuga-Bhakti* or sex-passionate love of God.

The fact is here was some love-inspired *Vaishnava*, Solomon or any one of his court, whose heart was possessed by the spirit of Radha and to whom the vision of Krishna was revealed in an overwhelming fashion.

The whole life of Dante was an unbroken process of adoration dedicated to the eternal spirit of divine love that is Radha. Radha apart from Krishna in her *truth* or *swarup* cannot be revealed to any finite spirit unless it is able to entirely assume the nature and character of the feminine, because on *the plane of divine life on which Radha lives* divinity manifests itself as one single male Person or *Purush*

पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यम् ।

and the eternal Feminine Radha and her shining attendants who are her embodied radiations. Every human being in his or her ultimate essence is such an attendant of Radha. He who is able to realise immediately and intrinsically the *eternal feminine truth of love in him*, is at once freed from the bondage of worldly life and becomes a seraphic sister of Radha to

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love Krishna eternally. All the great Vaishnava teachers, the *Goswamis* of the 16th and 17th century Bengal were such feminine spirits of love in their inner consciousness. Dante became one like them. All the world knows that he loved Beatrice, an Italian lady. But even a superficial study of his *Vita Nuova* shows that it was a wonderful kind of love, having nothing in it of the love for a woman however devoted which sometimes dominates the life of a man. It was an entire self-dedication, a sort of immersion like that of a bee in a lake of honey, or the unbroken flow of a stream into the sea :

मनोगतिरविच्छिन्ना यथा गङ्गाम्भसोऽम्बुधौ ।

Here is an evidence out of many, Dante's own words translated by Rossetti :

But as soon as I thus resolved, I began to feel a faintness and throbbing at my left side, which soon took possession of my whole body. Whereupon I remember that I covertly leaned my back unto a painting that ran round the walls of that house; and being fearful lest my trembling should be discerned of them, I lifted mine eyes to look on those ladies, and then first perceived among them the excellent Beatrice. And when I perceived her all my senses were over-powered by the great lordship that love obtained, *finding himself so near unto that most gracious being*, until nothing but the spirits of sight remained to me; and even these remained driven out of their own instruments, because love entered in that honoured place of theirs; that so he might the better behold her. And although I was other than at first, I grieved for the spirits so

expelled which kept up a sore lament, saying : If he had not in this wise thrust us forth, we also should behold the marvel of this lady.

By this many of her friends having discerned my confusion, began to wonder ; and together with herself kept whispering of me and mocking me. Whereupon my friend, who knew not what to conceive took me by the hands and drawing me forth from among them, required to know what ailed me. Then, having first held me at quiet for a space until my perceptions were come back to me. I made answer to my friend : Of a surety *I have now set my feet on that point of life, beyond the which he must not pass who would return.*

No psychology of sex-love, that powerful passion that a man feels towards a woman, no psychology of this can offer an explanation of these strange experiences of Dante, especially when we consider how this mysterious *passion* dominated the entire life and poetry of the mighty poet. The incredible truth is that in Beatrice, Dante found embodied his own soul : in other words his inmost *spirit* of love was awakened in him and *he* saw her reflected in the mirror of the figure of Beatrice. And so *it was not that Dante loved Beatrice as a man loves a woman*, but he felt that he was not himself but what?—Beatrice? one like Beatrice? a sister to her? a serving-maid to her?—anything and nothing. There arose a confusion of feeling about his identity. This is because the ‘sleeping beauty’ in the heart of Dante awoke and she saw that divine Feminine of whom all human souls are loving emanations. This Feminine is an embodiment of

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the love-faculty of God that is Krishna, and this is Radha who revealed herself to the perfectly pure *insight* of Dante in the person of Beatrice. If not considered in this light Dante's *behaviour* in relation to Beatrice is nothing but effeminate insanity. The manner in which he personifies and presents his master love is extremely interesting. What a profound significance is there in the words: *I have now set my feet on that point of life, beyond which he must not pass who would return*: because Dante in such moments would set his feet on the very brink of the ocean which Prabodhananda Saraswathi has called *Radha-Rasa-Sudhanidhi*, the sweet ocean of the love of Radha. In the whole History and Fiction of Europe there is no instance of love which can be compared with this wonderful love of Dante. Who in Europe knows the full significance of the astonishing life of Dante?

Swedenborg who never knew anything of Hinduism has given the name of *Divine-Love-and-Wisdom* to God and it is almost a translation of *Sachchidananda* which is a name of Krishna. He says:

God alone, consequently the Lord, is Love itself. Because He is Life itself: And angels and men are recipient of Life.

This is purely Vaishnava philosophy:

God alone is Love itself:

that is Love in its ultimate essence is one with God; and God in his essential Being is all Love:

शङ्कारसराजमयमूर्तिधर ।
 अतएव आत्मपर्यन्त सर्वचित्तर ।
 पुरुष योषित किंवा स्थावरजङ्गम ।
 सर्वचित्ताकर्षक साक्षात् मन्मथमथन ।
 चैतन्यचरितामृत ।

तासामबिरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः ।
 पीताम्बरधरः श्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः ।

श्रीमद्भागवत ।

God is an embodiment of the highest ecstasy of Love. He fascinates all, even Himself. He is the Cupid of Cupids. He attracts men, women, plants and animals. His name is Krishna.

Chaitanyacharitamrita.

He appeared among the Gopis, his lotus-like face beaming with smiles, clad in a purple attire, a garland of flowers on his breast, looking like a very Cupid of Cupids.

Srimadbhagavatam.

Krishna is Love itself, Love and Loveliness. All other attributes of His are consequences of Love. Krishna is Love in personal *embodiment*, Love and Beauty: the Love of all love and Beauty of all beauty.

*God is Love itself because
 He is Life itself.*

This is the last word of human philosophy. God is all perfection: he is all-completion, and all-contentment: why has he taken the trouble then of the creation?—that is, the manifestation?

Because He is Love and Love knows no complete-ment. Everything can be fulfilled, Love never. *Because Love is eternal wanting in eternal having*—what?—having and wanting *itself* and the Self of Love is the supreme bliss of giving away in the moment of receiving and receiving in the moment of giving, the process ending never. This is Radha-Krishna-Lila and this is Love and this is Life and this is God in the universe and in transcendence. Swedenborg the great saint realised a little of this profound Truth in his own life and he wanted to remodel Christianity accordingly.

God as Love is God as Life: So Krishna is called Narayan: *Nar* means the totality of beings with man as their head and *ayana* means Life or the basis of life. So it is in the Vaishnava Philosophy:

Thou supportest the life-process of mankind and all living beings generally. So thou art the primal Narayan. The universe rests on the fact that thou *knowest* it; thy forgetfulness of anything would mean its annihilation.

Chaitanyacharitamrita

In the *Vishnu-Puran* it is stated:

हादिनी सन्धिनी संवित् त्वय्येका सर्वसंस्थितौ ।

and in the *Srimad-Bhagavat*

सत्त्वं विशुद्धं वासुदेवराद्वितं यदीयते तत्र पुमानपावृतः ।

सत्त्वे च तस्मिन् भगवान् वासुदेवो ह्यधोक्षजो मे मनसा विधीयते ।

Krishna is known as the son of Basudev: Basudev means pure substance or the ultimate basis of Life. Krishna though He transcends the

farthest scope of sense-knowledge becomes an object of comprehension to him who goes beyond the external forms of life and reaches their final substance. I adore Him as the foundation of Life with the devotion of my heart.

Angels and men are recipients of divine Life: It is a general truth which is to be met with everywhere in the Hindu scriptures :

यस्यैकनिश्चितकालमथावलंब्य जीवन्ति लोमविलजा जगदण्डनाथाः ।

विष्णुर्महान् स इहकलाविशेषो गोविन्दमादिपुरुषं तमहं भजामि ।

ब्रह्मसंहिता ।

The lives of the ruling divinities of the world, which mean millions of ages, are bound up with one passing breath of Krishna. He is Life eternal and infinite. The lives of the gods and angels are fractional moments of this Life.

Brahma-Sanhita

The v' of the Tenth Canto of the Gita is a magnificent expression of this truth: *Angels and men are recipients of this life*.

But the most astonishing thing in the life of Swedenborg is his realisation of the central principle of Divine Life, so profoundly grasped by the Hindu sages and so wonderfully delineated in the Scriptures, the principle that God is *Divine Man*, that is, God is the eternal Man who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.¹ All the philosophers and learned men of the world except the Hindu

¹ Christianity recognises the truth but does so only half-heartedly and half-obscures it in its half-harmonious doctrine of the Trinity.

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India dismiss this greatest truth of religion by honouring it with the name of *Anthropomorphism*. But this word contains the most fundamental truth of divine life. So Swedenborg says :

God is very man. In all the heaven, the conception held of God is that he is Man ;

and then,

Since He is a Man, He has a body and every thing belonging thereto ; thus He has a face, breast, abdomen, loins and feet. * * * He has also eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and tongue.

In the *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* this truth is distinctly stated,

कृष्णेन यत्केन खेला सर्वोत्तम नरलीला नखपु ताहार स्वरूप ।

Of all manifestations of God the highest is that He lives as Man among men : The human form of His is His proper eternal Form.

In the Gita Krishna says :

अवजानन्ति मां मूढाः मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।

परम्भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ।—गीता ।

The foolish folk disregard me in my assumption of the human form, because they do not know that in this form I am the Lord of all and the supreme truth of my life lies in this.

In the *Srimadbhagavat* we have

यस्याननंमकरकण्डलचारुकर्णभ्राजत्कपोलसुभगं सुविलासहासम् ।

नित्योत्सवं न तनुपुर्दृशिभिः पिबन्त्यो नार्योनराश्चमुदिताः कुपिता निमेष्व ।

His shining face lit up with playful smiles is the fountain of all grace, beauty and joy, the face with its finely-chiselled ears and cheeks like radiant blooms of emerald. The very sight of it is ever-lasting jubilation. Men, women and angels are drinking his beauty day and night, but they are never satiated.

But these limbs and organs of the person of God are not made of the ordinary physiological tissue. They are of a fine spirit-substance, a kind of exquisite thought-stuff so to say. Milton makes some unsuccessful attempts to describe them in the *Paradise Lost* in connection with the angelic bodies. The truth is indicated in the *Brahma-Sanhita* :

अङ्गानि यस्य सकेलन्द्रियवृत्तिमन्ति पश्यन्ति पान्ति कलयन्ति चिरं
जगन्ति ।

आनन्दचिन्मयसमुज्ज्वलविग्रहस्य गोविन्दमादिपुरुषं तमहं भजामि ।

His limbs are all instinct with sense-faculties. They perceive, they think and feel, they support the worlds and direct their courses. His body is made of the eternal substance of resplendent Joy and Intelligence.

The whole of the poetry of Shelley is pervaded by not only the principle but a vivid realisation of Sri-Radhakrishna-Lila in its eternal process. He first of all calls Krishna by such names as *Loveliness*, *Intellectual Beauty*, and *Spirit fair*. He then incarnates him as Laon in the *Revolt of Islam* and profoundly realises him as Prometheus in *Prometheus Unbound*. Radha appears as a charming vision of a resplendent lady to Shelley's wandering

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poet in *Alastor*. Shelley's conception grows in depth and reality and Radha is again there in the *Witch of Atlas*, as the Witch :

A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty, deep her eyes * * *
The dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form * * * her soft smiles shone afar.
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

* * * *

She was beautiful, her beauty made
The bright world dim, and every thing beside,
Seemed like the floating image of a shade.

Cupid charms all. Krishna charms Cupid. Radha charms Krishna. Therefore she is an enchantress—the Witch! After this Radha, the Queen of Beauty and Love, revealed herself to Shelley in the person of an Italian lady named Emilia Viviani. She proved to Shelley what Beatrice was to Dante. She was no human being to Shelley. He found in her the universal spirit of love manifested to him in a human shape. She is

Sweet Benediction in the eternal curse!
Veiled glory of this lampless universe,
Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form
Among the Dead! Thou star above the storm!
Thou harmony of nature's Art! Thou Mirror
In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on!

Shelley calls her Epipsychidion which is the most significant name that one could coin to denominate Radha in her relation to human souls. It means a *soul upon a soul*, a spirit corresponding

with a spirit, the divine counterpart of the human Psyche. All human Souls are sister-subjects of Radha.

In her mild lights the starry spirits dance !

The Vaishnava life grows apace in Shelley and his conception of Krishna and Radha gains both in definite concreteness and philosophical insight. Radha, this time not alone but with Krishna, descends to the earth as Cythna to love her Krishna as Laon and with him to minister to the wants of suffering humanity. Laon says of Cythna :

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second half, far dearer and more fair.

* * * *

Her willing feet
Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet :
Beyond the aerial mountains * * *
Through forest wide and old and lawny dells
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald walls.

The last two lines may be taken as a short description of Brindaban, which means the green and flowery woodlands of the world in their eternal aspects. Cythna is equivalent to *Chaitanya*, which means supreme consciousness of divine love. In the *Revolt of Islam* Radha-as-Cythna with all her divinity and glory and depth of love moves on a human plane in the midst of human circumstances. In *Prometheus Unbound*, Asia who is Radha, that is, *Esha*, which means the desired of all desires, is found on a divine plane, in brighter and purer

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circumstances and with a still greater manifestation of glorious divinity and deeper dignity of love.

Love like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illuminate earth and heaven,
And the deep ocean, and the sunless caves !

* * * *

Lamp of earth ! Where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

That is Asia and that is Radha, the splendour of
whose face obscures the light of a million moons :

शतकोटि चन्द्र जिनि आनन डजाला ।

Shelley thus describes the glowing and far-illuminating *influence* of the divine person of Prometheus which is the name he here gives to his Krishna :

Love * from his soft and flowing limbs
And passion-parted lips, and keen faint eyes
Streamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere
Which wrapt me in its all-dissolving power
As the warm ether of the morning sun.

This is exactly in the manner of Rup-Goswami's

अखिलरसामृतमूर्तिः प्रमृमररुचिहृदतारकापालिः ।

कलितश्यामललितो राधाप्रेयान् विधुर्जयति ।

Glory to him who is an immortal embodiment of all the purest and brightest sentiments of love known in human or celestial life, him the ever-expanding radiance of whose beauty enthral the

hearts of the damsels of Brindaban. His complexion is delicate blue. He is the Beloved of Radha.

Bhaktirasamrita-Sindhu.

Love from his soft and flowing limbs *
Streamed forth like vaporous fire.

A thorough study of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* will disclose many startling facts enhancing the wonder of all wonders how Shelley could illuminate all his mind and heart and soul with so many mysterious truths of the Lila-life of Krishna which even the deepest philosophical learning cannot reveal to any one.

Lord Gouranga is called Krishna-Chaitanya, because his God-intoxicated life is a concrete realisation of the greatest ideal of human life, the complete awakening of the Krishna-Consciousness in the human mind in all its depth and intensity, that is the emancipation, the setting-free from all artificial super-impositions, the manifold bondages of the impure worldly life, the setting-free of the divine spirit in man whose nature is eternal yearning for union with God. This is exactly the meaning of the title *Prometheus Unbound*. Prometheus means forethinker, that is, super-consciousness, that is, of the deep-seated Divine in human life. *Unbound*, that is, how this Divine consciousness can be freed from the chains and shackles of the miserable life on earth. Therefore *Prometheus Unbound* translated into Sanskrit is *Krishna-Chaitanya*.

Our proposition is that Krishna is the universal God of the universal Man, the God who is the basis, the soul, the central reconciliation of the Gods of the religions of the world. Krishna is that God who will spontaneously emerge on the perfectly pure heart of a man or an angel whose mind has undergone no modification through contact with the conventions of the religious thought of the world, will emerge, that is, when he will overflow with supersensuous love. Krishna is that God who will manifest himself when the Gods of the religions will put off the external wrappings of their formal differences, pass into one another and become One in a final and eternal synthesis. Shelley who repudiated Christianity and revolted from all other religions, and wrote the noblest and brightest of all religious poetry though the world is too blunt in its religious sense to recognise this, is a triumphant proof of this great truth, having been filled full of Krishna and Radha in his spiritual life.

The *Song of Solomon* is the very soul of the religious thought of the Old Testament, the fullest blown flower of the tree, and that is all Radha and Krishna. Christ's life and all that about the prophecy, the miraculous conception, the lowly birth-place, the flight for fear of Herod, the child-slaughterer, are a milder repetition of the early life of Krishna as the *Avatar*. Two hundred passages can be culled out of the Gospels to show the

similarity of Christ's teaching with those of Krishna in the Gita, though in its ethical aspect only.

The wonderful philosophy of the Gita we could not expect in Palestine or anywhere in the world outside of India. The profound conception of divine love that is given in the Tenth Book of the Srimadbhagavat is beyond the comprehension of the abstract European philosophies and also of the conventional Christian theology. In Mediæval Roman Catholic Christianity there grew up a delicate course of religious realisation in the line of ardent love, of that variety of it which may be called sex-love on the divine plane, that is, the love of *man* as a feminine spirit for God or Christ as a beautiful and loving youth. In this a sort of *super-sensuous perception* and a super-sensual feeling takes place, not in fancy, but in vivid reality, in the actual relation of the soul with God not as thought but as concrete Truth. All human experiences relating to this spiritual Fact go by the name of mysticism in the world. The existence of the word and its use is a proof of the absence of *immediate experience of real spiritual life*.

There is no word in the world of Hindu thought corresponding with the English word *mysticism* which betrays the *mysticism* of the minds of them whom Wordsworth has called the *Intellectual-all-in-alls*. This Christian mysticism so far as I know flourished in the Mediæval ages among women mainly. The mediæval convents for the nuns

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were the principal seats of this *raganuga-bhakti* called mysticism by the ignorant. There is a piece of prose-writing dated about A.D. 1210. It is in the first volume of Morris' *Specimens of Early English Literature*. It is named *The Wohunge of Ure Laverd, The Wooing of Our Lord*. In it, Jesus is addressed as, 'Jesu, my life's love,' 'Jesu, sweet Jesu,' and 'Jesu, sweet Jesu, permit that the love of thee be all my pleasure'. And then we read:

Ah! what shall I do now! Now my heart breaks!
My eyes flow to flood! My beloved is destined to die!

When Christianity came to a state when such feelings were actually felt in Christian minds it passed into the Religion of Krishna in essence. This will read like a translation of the following words of Sri-Chaitanya:

Ah me! What shall I do? Where shall I find my beloved Krishna? Where is the Lord of my heart?—he who plays on his charming flute? To whom shall I confide—who will sympathise with my grief? My heart is being rent with the pang of his separation.

The Greek Orpheus with his divine lyre, and enchantment of music could be no other than Krishna himself in one of his myriad-sided manifestations. He could plunge even the most worldly-minded men and women into ambrosial emotions of self-forgetful love and ecstasy. Attracted by the fascination of his music wild animals of the forest would gather round and fawn

on him and show their delight and affectionate feeling for him. He could startle stones and plants into consciousness of joy with his melting melodies. He turned the rigid heart of Pluto, the god of the Shades to gentle compassion and got his beloved Urydice back from death to love, by the magic of his song. When he played his flute in Hades the sufferings of the sinners were all changed into sweet emotions of joy. It is thus because

पुरुष योषित किम्वा स्थावर जङ्गम ।

सर्वचित्ताकर्षक साक्षात् मन्मथमथन ।

He intoxicates the heart even of Cupid ; he fascinates not noly men and women, but also animals and plants.

Chaitanyacharitamrita ;

and again

यार वेणुध्वनि शुनि स्थावरजङ्गमप्राणी पुलककम्प अश्रु वहे धार ।

On hearing the sounds of whose flute both sentient and insensate things are delighted, tremble with emotion and melt into tears.

Chaitanyacharitamrita.

Dante saw a vision of Radha in Beatrice and his life flowed into an eternity of blissful love, Dante, the devoutest Christian of the age. Living so near to and also in the land of Krishna, the Mahomedans caught some reflection of the love-instinct influence of Krishna, and there sprang up a new sect among them, I mean, the Sufis of Persia. Scholars maintain that Sufism derived its inspiration from Vedanta. They speak a half-truth.

Sufism bears on its very face an impression of Vaishnavism and carries in its heart a deep influence of the same. Vedanta is not outside the province of Vaishnavism as nothing is. No Vedantism could produce such poets as Hafiz, Sadi and Jalaluddin Rumi who sang of the beauties of nature in their spiritual influences, of flowers, of birds and their songs, of the raptures of super-sensuous love and of the wines not of grapes but of the spirit and in the midst of them the youthful and beautiful Beloved, the source of life and love and the enjoyment and sufferings of love, and God the beautiful and God as enamoured of the human soul can be no other than Krishna. The religious practices of the Sufis if carefully studied will disclose many a similarity between Sufism and the religion of Krishna. It is a significant thing that a Persian lady of the 9th century A.D. is reputed to be the founder of this astonishing Islamic Sect so inconsistent with the general religious practices of Islam.

The central meaning which a thorough study of Wordsworth's poetry yields is, to put it definitely, this: The whole of nature is pervaded by one living and loving spirit. He is always one and at the same time and through an inconceivable power of his, breaks himself up into, or, which is the same thing, sends out of his inexhaustible being as radiations, millions of individual spirits. These spirits live in close contact with him and forms

a vast community of the sweetest of relations. All their concern is to love him and adore him. They are always happy, joyous and bright. They play delicate and delicious pranks of love with their Beloved and are always eager to please him. The beauties and movements of nature which we see are external expressions of this internal play of love. The true religion of man consists in purifying the heart from the spots of earthly desire by constant contemplation of the graces of nature in her changing phenomena and thus to enter her blessed life of immortal happiness and love. This is the meaning of Wordsworth's poetry and this is the meaning of Krishna-Lila in its general aspects. Here the indwelling spirit of nature is Krishna and nature in her essence is Radha who is called *Adya-Prakriti*, that is, Primal Nature.

The countless other spirits of nature correspond to Radha's attendants, her sisters, the Brajanganas and Gopis. The universe of nature is Brindaban which means this exactly, for Brinda as represented in Vaishnavism is that Power of nature which directs and *arranges* her creative processes. In one of Wordsworth's poems, named *Vernal Ode* he says that he saw in a waking vision ;

The form and rich habiliments of One
Whose countenance bore resemblance to the sun
Upon the apex of a lofty cone*
The stranger stood alone * * *
Beneath the shadow of his purple wings
Rested a golden harp ; he touched the strings

And sang *** Mild pastoral Muse,
Him rather suits it, side by side with thee,
Wrapped in a fit of pleasing indolence,
While thy tired lute hangs on the hawthorn tree
To lie and listen ***
To the soft murmur of the vagrant Bee.

This stranger may be thought to be a passing vision of Krishna playing on his flute and then sitting wrapped in a fit of love-longuor with Radha, a pastoral Muse sitting by. So Rabindranath Tagore sings:

When the sunshine is sweet
And the time is lazy, the trees
Rustle and the shadows play.
I know not what image of thine
Flashes into my vision out of the
Blue of the sky.¹

Beneath the concave of an April sky,
When all the fields with freshest green were
dight.

So begins Wordsworth's poem. Wordsworth visions Krishna-Lila in the inner recesses of nature, that is on the *natural* plane. Shelley celebrates it in a higher spiritual realm. Vaishnavism delineates the revelation of the same in the supreme divine sphere.

Rabindranath Tagore is a Brahmo. As such he has no faith in the Krishna Cult. He does not believe in the existence of Krishna or any of the gods. But the deepest and the most beautiful parts of his poetry are all permeated by the spirit of

¹ Literally translated from the original Bengali.

Krishna, by the living influence of the *bodily* presence of Krishna as it were. When he sings

सुन्दर तुमि ऐसेछिले आज प्राते ।

अरुणवरण पारिजात लये हाते ।

Thou beautiful one, thou camest this morning with a scarlet *parijat* in hand.

His God becomes Krishna, the all-beautiful one, with a red *parijat*, an emblem of that love which fulfils all desires and gives immortality :

मयि भक्तिहि भूतानाममृतत्वाय कल्पते ।

When he writes :

Have you, O Lord of my heart, finished enjoying all that was mine, all my beauty, my song, my love, my waking and sleep ? Do you find my embrace wanting in intensity of passion, my kisses devoid of intoxication ? Are the nights of your secret visits to the flowery grove of my life over now ?¹

He assumes, perhaps unconsciously, the character of a Gopi, one of Krishna's darlings in the highest heaven of immortal love. When his Divinity appears, as it does so often, as a fascinating Feminine, he becomes a worshipper of Radha.

How wonderfully diverse art thou in the world, O damsel of myriad forms ! Thou art sparkling with a million rays in the bright blue sky ! Thou art beaming with over-flowing joy in groves of flowers ! Thou art sporting with restless feet in heaven and on earth, O thou ever-flitting goddess of brilliance and beauty !¹

¹ Literally translated from the original Bengali.

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In the whole world of thought this conception of Divinity can mean nothing but Radha. Hundreds of instances of this type of conception can be found in the abundant poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

Maeterlinck is one of the most prominent world-figures of literature to-day and some of his best works happen to be suggested by some of the lesser aspects of Radha-Krishna-Lila of love, treated in the symbolical fashion, so that divested of their spiritual significance, they at once come down to a low sensual plane and become mere third-rate literature worse than the worst of the minor Elizabethan dramas. His *Pelleas and Melisanda* and *Alladine and Pallomides* are instances in question. The name Alladine seems to be the writer's corruption of the Sanskrit *Ahladini* which is the primary name of Radha, the power that enraptures the heart of Krishna. The heroines of these dramas as well as their lovers violently cut off all the moorings of their social life and fling themselves into the fierce whirlpools of frantic passions which drift them wildly into a bottomless pit of annihilation or an infinite ocean of ecstasy which, no one knows! If it is intended to indicate that supreme course of religious life which is sanctioned by such verses of the Gita :

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Fling away all your duties, all your forms of religion ; surrender yourself entirely unto me ; I will save you from all sins and make you immortal ; don't regret.

Gita, XVIII, 66 :

that is, passionate and all-sacrificing love for Krishna, then it is all right and that is the meaning. If that is not the meaning it is not worth the trouble of a serious reading. It is mere Byronism devoid of Byron's splendour and first-hand realism.

Every one endowed with a keen consciousness of beauty and feeling of love is in a sense a worshipper of Krishna. God as Krishna alone is the Divinity who is pervadingly and interpenetratingly existent in the life of mankind from the highest to the lowest grade of it. Every man, every woman, presents offerings of adoration to Krishna, distantly or mistakingly or unconsciously. Every poet is a worshipper of Krishna. Every lover's life is a ceremony in the apotheosis of Krishna since the lover is a medium through whom Krishna has his intrigues of love with his Queen of Beauty represented by the beloved. He is Krishna and can be none but Krishna, the supreme Lord of Love and hence of the Universe of which Love is the central soul :

Love gives it energy, Love gave it birth.

This brief account and this bird's-eye view will show how in all ages and all countries and under

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the most diverse intellectual circumstances the human mind has spontaneously turned to Krishna, contemplated him, sung of him and adored him with the offerings of its highest treasures of thought.

VIII

KRISHNA AND THE MAHABHARAT

THOUGH Krishna is of the whole universe and is wistfully looking up for favour of love to the face of every one in the world, he has been known, loved and consciously realised only in India for the last three thousand years at least. He appeared as an Incarnation, the greatest of all Incarnations, on the vast arena of the Indian Aryan and non-Aryan life at the time when the struggle for settlement, establishment of political power, development of a moral and religious civilisation and the production of a wonderful philosophical literature, the Vedas and the Upanishads, was over and there arose the necessity of a new evolution, a new adjustment and organisation of the national elements which had been decentralised and hence fallen into disorder and set up a moral fermentation. This state is referred to in the Puranas as the last epoch of the Dwapara Yuga. We may say that the momentous event of the advent of Krishna in Indian national life happened in that stage of transition when the first philosophic age was over and the epic age began.

यदा यदाहि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहं ।

I assume human form and *come down* to the world of man¹ whenever virtue and righteousness decline and vice and iniquity become predominant in society and state.

Gita, IV, 7

Virtue and Righteousness failed and vice and iniquity prevailed in India. Peace and repose broke away and disquiet and disturbance arose. The central suzerain supremacy ceased to exist, the paramount power of control dissipated away and conflict for political authority ensued. The *condescendence* from on high of a supreme power to put things to rights was the crying need of the time. The voiceless call of the nation pierced the sky. God responded. Krishna appeared. A new era dawned on Indian History. When peace and prosperity reigned in India under a permanent government, arts and industries flourished, moral and intellectual culture progressed, pursuit of literary and philosophical knowledge occupied a large portion of the time and energy of India, the devout religious practices of the *tapobans*, those sweet and tranquil hermitages, went on uninterrupted, the beneficent intervention of Krishna was not called for. When kings and emperors like Dushmanta, Bharat, Jajati, Puru, Prabir and Kuru, ruled in India, there was no internecine struggle

¹ Literally *create myself* or *shape a body for myself*.

for power. The country kept her vast integrity intact. But when the integral unity of the country broke up, diverse isolated monarchies and petty principalities arose, and constant contention for supreme power became the common political phenomenon of the country, Krishna came forward and took his legitimate seat at the helm of affairs. The names of hundreds of kings and princes occur in the bead-roll of the warlike leaders of the vast and dreadful armaments of the great war of Kurukshetra. The Pandavas and the Kaurava-brothers were there of course in the front ranks. Beside them there were the Jadavas of the kingdom of Dwaraka. After them the prominent ruling chiefs were Virat, Somadatta, Karna, Valmik, Sakuni, Jaydratha, Dhristadyumna, Drupad, Salya, the chiefs of Surasena, Magadha, Kashi, Kalinga, then Bhagadatta, Susharma, Bhurisrava, Jujudhan, Purujit, Kuntibhoji, Shaivya, Judhamanya and a hundred others. Besides there were Kansa, Sishupal, Jarasandha, Dantabakra, Jubanaswa, Anusawala, Niladhawaj, Manibhadra, Mauradhawaj, Vabrubahan and many others with whom Krishna or the Pandavas had to deal. It is a sad mistake to regard these as fictitious names. The *Mahabharat* is a historical epic. It is history, poetry, legend, scripture and philosophy all in one, but mainly history.

History is a record of the principal movements and prominent incidents of human life in its

worldly aspects. Puran is also history, but not of the outer social and political features of human life, but of man's inner moral and spiritual experiences expressed in terms of fact and reason. He alone is able to comprehend the real and *truthful* meaning of the Purana who possesses a clear consciousness of the fact that there is a *concrete* spiritual universe corresponding with the world of the psychologico-physical facts of the ordinary human life, a universe, which is infinite. He who reads the Mahabharat and comes to the conclusion that it is all fable at once betrays his thickness of perception and obtuseness of understanding or purblindness due to prepossession of prejudice. The poetical idealisation, the imaginative overgrowth of adornment and the under-current of moral and spiritual purpose are as distinctly intelligible as the substantial course of historical action and the solid existence of historical fact. There is a mighty vibration of vivid and veritable human life, actually *lived*, not realistically *conceived* as in a drama of Shakespeare or a novel of Dickens, throughout the central narrative of the *Mahabharat*. No effort is needed to discover this.

Krishna is undoubtedly the hero, the presiding power of the Mahabharat. As history it has Krishna, the matchless genius, as its central figure, its prime mover. As fiction it has frequently turned to Krishna, the divine ideal for its meaning and colour. As poetry it has drawn its inspiration

from Krishna, the fountain-head of all beauty and truth. As scripture it has taught the religion of Krishna-bhakti. This is the relation between Krishna and the Mahabharat. Krishna as historically manifested and then as a living ideal since his disappearance, is the all-influencing political, social and spiritual power of the Pauranic and the heroic age or the post-Pauranic and pre-Buddhistic age of India. Krishna is the mighty Protagonist of the splendid drama of the Aryan life between the end of the Upanishadic age and the beginning of chronological history. It was he who interconnected and gave organic unity to the scattered forces of Indian life.

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे सणिगणा इव ।

All these are strung on Me as the pearls of a necklace are strung on its thread,

is true of the life of the universe as well as of the ancient history of India. Krishna is the golden thread on which the widely diverse life of the ancient Indian Aryans is strung. He recognised and reconstructed Indian state and society and its political life after its break-down since the passing away of the glory of the Upanishadic consummation. Since then all the courses of Indian life have moved either with Krishna as their centre or with various relations to him, in obedience to his supremacy or in wicked opposition to him.

The age of the Mahabharat is the age of a great political revolution. Fierce internal dissensions

are fretting away the national vitality. Dark thunder-clouds are gathering in grim and sullen procession from sky to sky. Terrible grumblings are bursting out of them at irregular intervals. The huge vessel of the gigantic life of the Aryan nation is trembling on the bottomless waters of the Indian ocean. Krishna is casting eagle-eyed glances sweeping far and wide and observing the conditions from every perspective. He is quiet, tranquil and firm. His face is glowing with the reflection of a deep intellectual illumination. His heart is instinct with a hushed-up electric energy. He is resolute and full of the spirit of penetrating inquiry. He is scanning all affairs. There is no symptom of haste. But he is keenly vigilant. He sees that the war is inevitable and imminent. He contemplates, forms decisions and draws up a mental programme of how to proceed, what to achieve, what efforts to make and how to direct them, what are the means to be adopted, whom to deal with and how to do that, what forces to be employed and to what purposes! The Kauravas, the Pandavas, the Jadavas and all the ruling powers of India are there ready for a bloody conflict, with their countless regiments of veteran fighters. The greatest hero of the world, the sharp-sighted statesman, the mightiest genius endowed with endless learning and all-accomplishing spiritual forces is there in the midst of this wilderness of armed and

armoured men, directing their warlike movements with the movements of a finger. We find Krishna in this circumstance and in the midst of these conditions on the eve of the war of Kurukshetra. It is an inspiring vision. And then from the wedding of Draupadi to the destruction of the Jadavas on the sea-shore at Pravash, Krishna is everywhere and in everything inciting all the forces that work the complex scheme of the tumultuous national life.

IX

KRISHNA AND THE PURANAS

THERE are eighteen principal and eighteen minor Puranas and countless other scriptures of earlier and later origins like *Haribansa*, *Gopal-Tapani Sruti*, *Brahma-Sanhita* and *Narada-Pancharatra*. All these are pervaded by descriptions, narrations, philosophical discussions and references of Krishna and his Lila-life, his adventures, his performances, his virtues, his valour, his power, his glory, his divinity, his beauty, his love, his magnanimity, his generosity, praises, prayers, hymns and songs dedicated to him and above all his *bhaktanugraha*, his loving-kindness shown on hundreds of occasions to his worshippers. Krishna is the omnipresent presiding Deity of the Hindu Scriptures after the Vedas and the Upanishads. He is at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of almost every aspect of India's religious life. He is the foundation as well as the subject of all these holy writs of the Hindus. He appears over and over again permeating the sacred writings in innumerable forms of beauty, sentiments, music,

colour and song. Krishna is the one absorbing object of thought and meditation and desire. In sorrows and joys, in tears and smiles, in every occurrence of daily life, Krishna is there as the life-power of every process of life. Krishna fills with his vivifying influence all noble needs, great enterprises, admirable accomplishments, warlike undertakings, religious practices, spiritual contemplation, holy sacrifices and other rites and ceremonies, all endeavours of spiritual realisation of life, every form and every process of human energy in the Pauranic world.

Sanak, Sanatan, Sananda, Sanat Kumar, Narada, Suka, Kasyap, Bhrigu, Atri, Angira, Vyas, Parasara, Vashishtha, Yajñabalka, Harit, all are occupied with the thought of Krishna. Who is Krishna? What is Krishna? Why is Krishna? How to realise Krishna in life? These are the common questions. Krishna is Brahma. Krishna is the Oversoul. Krishna is supreme Divinity. Krishna is Man. Krishna is Superman. Krishna is the soul of man. Krishna is Narayan and the greatest of men. He alone is adorable. All worship is due to him. He is the greatest of all gods. All gods are in him. He is Kapil, he is Vadarayan, he is Patanjali. He is Vāsudev. He is the beloved son of Jasoda. He is Nrisimha. He is Vamana. He is Parushu-Ram. He is the destroyer of Ravana. Such are the topics of Pauranic treatment. Such are the subjects of

poetical or philosophical delineation or discussion. The Rishis, the Munis, the dreamers and devotees, the scholars and poets, men, gods, giants, demons, all are contemplating Krishna, discussing him, studying him, understanding him, seeking him, shirking him, struggling with him, warring with him. The winds are scattering the music of his name far and near. The mountains are sending back the echoes of its melodious vibrations. The waves of the ocean are quivering in response to these!

That is the world of human life represented by the Puranas. He who does not know this fact may ignorantly affirm that Krishna is fable. He who will study the Puranas with open eyes and free hearts will see clearly that no such literature could grow up without a real life corresponding with them as its moral support. It is impossible for such a huge literature, so earnest, so vivid, so definite and so deep, to come into existence without a counterpart of actual life behind it to supply its inspiration. No literature of fiction like that of Victor Hugo or Sir Walter Scott was known or thought of in ancient times. The supernaturalness, the incredible exaggerations, the apparent fantasticities of the Hindu Scriptures are due to the fact, which is always ignored, that though in the world of physical and *sensuous* objects everything is subject to an imposition of limit and hence the mind having to deal exclusively with the material world gets

accustomed to limitation at every step and has the character of its thought rigidly moulded by this poor limitedness of process, when the inspired and illuminated mind breaks asunder the Liliputian walls of limits and launches out into the boundless universe of spirit, it grows to inconceivably large dimensions of thought and its conceptions swell up to corresponding breadth of stature. If we remember this great psychological truth, we will have to wonder not at the fantastic magnification of the truths which seem to be wild fantasies and nothing else, but the extraordinary power of self-control with which the great writers must have kept their imagination within reasonable bounds of illuminated intelligibility. One thing more is to be borne in mind by the critic who will pass judgments on the Puranas. The logic of thought and action that will hold good in the physical world, must be modified, supplemented and enlarged in its scope in order to be applicable in the spiritual sphere, and at times must be supplanted by a higher logic. The human intellect, however developed, is a poor instrument often impotent, in manipulating spiritual objects.

The Puranas are not fables but histories of human experiences on the supersensuous plane. The life and works of Krishna delineated in the Puranas are facts appearing to the natural eye as magnified and coloured by rays not of imagination but of eternal spiritual truth refracted by physical

circumstances. We are considering the omnipresence of Krishna in the Pauranic world. Those who are inclined to suppose that Krishna is mere imagination should take this into consideration—this ubiquitous ministration of Krishna in the Pauranic world. King Prithu performs a great sacrifice. Krishna is the guardian-angel who saves him from the hostility of Indra, wards off the evils intended to him by Indra, sanctifies the sacrifice and blesses him with immortality. The angry Durbasa is about to blast with curses the pious life of king Ambarish. Krishna chastises the arrogant ascetic and glorifies the virtuous king. The little prince Dhruba is wounded in his feeling by the contemptuous treatment of a step-mother, goes to the forest in search of Krishna hearing that Krishna alone can console his aggrieved spirit, becomes rapt in meditation and passes many a year insensible to the external world. Krishna is attracted by his powerful contemplation, intense, ardent and self-forgetful, fulfils his desire and raises him to an immortal position higher than that of the king of gods. Hiranyakashipu is a mighty demon. He wants to try his strength with Krishna whom he regards with virulent hostility. He has vanquished all other heroes in the world. He must achieve a victory over Krishna. His son Prahlad is a little boy with a heart full of love for Krishna. He is inhumanly persecuted by his father for his devotion to Krishna. Krishna incarnates

himself as a man-formed Lion, kills Hiranyakashipu and grants Prahlad the supreme favour of immortal bliss and eternal love of the Lord. There is an indigent Brahman named Sudama. His life is devoid of everything but full of love for Krishna. He goes to Dwaraka to see Krishna with the poor present of a handful of fried and crushed paddy called *chira*. Krishna honours him in a princely way, accepts his present as if it were a priceless treasure because it is a present of love. When he comes back to his cottage he finds to his unutterable surprise that his little cottage has been transformed into a magnificent palace. Gayasura, the son of Tripurasur, is a worshipper of Krishna. He has grown to indomitable power. He makes a conquest of the blessed country of the gods. The gods fall prostrate at the feet of Krishna and pray that he may save them from the humiliation. Krishna tries Gayasur's love and asks whether he can turn to stone at his request. Gayasura can do anything for Krishna. He agrees on condition that Krishna will forever stand upon him with his lotus-like feet planted on his head of stone. The ocean has been churned and *amrita* has arisen out of the depths. The *devas* and the *asuras* are contending with one another over the possession of the immortal drink. Krishna assumes the form of a charming goddess, deceives the Asuras and makes the *devas* the permanent owners of the ambrosial

liquor. King Vali is a munificent giver of gifts. His bounty is limitless. He proudly thinks that he has the power and the means to grant anything and everything that any one will ask of him. Krishna comes to him as a dwarf and begs of him a little land to hold three steps of his tiny foot. Vali smiles and chides the little beggar for not praying for a more valuable boon, say a wider piece of land and gives him what he wants. But, behold! a miracle of miracles! The dwarf takes one step and it covers the whole of the earth and the heavens. He takes another step and his little foot occupies all the nether regions. Where is the place for the third step? Vali begs that it should be on his own head. He leaves the earth and goes to the under-world; but Krishna is compelled by his love to stand for ever at the door of his subterranean palace. Thus *Bhagavan* is conquered in conquering the *Bhakta*. Indra possesses the wonderful celestial flower called *Parijat* which can fulfil all the desires of its owner. Indra in his vain-glory thinks that no one has the power to enjoy this immortal flower except himself, not even Krishna. Satyabhama Krishna's beloved queen wants the flower. Krishna fights with Indra and makes him understand whether there is any one in the world who deserves to have the flower. Indra surrenders the floral treasure and it blooms in the queen's garden. Sisupal is a powerful tyrant and an invincible worker of iniquity. He has kept

in prison as captives about a hundred ruling princes and wants to sacrifice them. He defies Krishna and denies his divinity. Krishna cuts off his head with his irresistible disc called *Sudarshan* and sets the princes free. The Puranas relate hundreds of events, incidents and adventures of diverse orders all in beautiful settings of profound spiritual significance and everywhere celebrates the infinite glory of Krishna's divine life. The greatest, the deepest, the most poetical and the most philosophical of the Puranas is the *Srimad-Bhagavat*.

X

KRISHNA IN INDIVIDUAL LIVES

BESIDES these we have got authentic records kept by saintly persons of actual events, anecdotes and incidents occurring in this modern age of general scepticism--occurrences in which Krishna has appeared to men and women and boys and girls and favoured them and blessed them and severed their bonds of earthly life and made them eternally happy. There is absolutely no colouring of imagination in these simple narratives. They are naked statements of facts made by men of holy lives and natures of pristine purity who could have no motives to perpetuate falsehoods. It is impossible that such saints and philosophers as Sri-Rup and Sri-Sanatan, who held the highest positions at the court of Hussain Shah, the powerful sovereign of the greater Bengal in the 16th century, threw away their honours and wealth like tattered clothes and became *sannyasis* for love of Krishna and Chaitanya, it is impossible that such men whom even a Mahomedan emperor like Akbar was eager to honour with gifts which they refused, should tell

us fables for truths about Krishna their beloved Lord and God. The accounts of Krishna's personal manifestation often as a restless boy of a bright-blue complexion, most lovely and loving and of an exquisitely-formed figure and finely-chiselled limbs are too many to be mentioned here. I have referred to the wonderful story of Vilwamangal's life. His *Krishna-Karnamrita* is perhaps the most passionate expression of divine love in the world. When he sees Krishna after a long wandering through forests from the Godavary to the Jamuna, in a wild quest for Krishna, he exclaims

मारः स्वयं नु मधुरद्युतिमण्डलं नु
 माधुर्यमेव नु मनोनयनामृतं नु
 वेणीमृजो नु मम जीवितवल्लभो नु
 कृष्णेऽयमभ्युदयते मम लोचनाय ।
 कृष्णकर्णामृतम् ।

Is this Cupid himself? Is this a charming sphere of radiance? Loveliness incarnate is it? Eternal delight for my heart and sight? My beloved Lord returned after long absence, the desired of my soul, I think! My own Krishna and no one else distinctly manifest to my eyes!

Krishna-Karnamrita.

Krishna said, 'I am he whom you seek. I am yours for ever and you are mine. You have charmed me by your love and nothing is sweeter to me than your songs which are all love. Let the world call these immortal songs by the name *Krishna-Karnamrita*, for they are as nectar to my ears.'

Gopal Bhatta, a South Indian Brahman, one of the greatest disciples of Sri-Chaitanya, used to worship the sacred stone called *Shalagram*. He regretted that he could not adorn the image of his beloved Lord with ornaments, it being only a stone. Next morning he found to his extreme surprise a fine stone-image of Krishna in the elegant posture of playing his flute with the *Shalagram* sticking to his back. The image is still in Brindaban.

Arjun Misra an Oria Brahman, is a devout Vaishnava. His whole heart is set on Krishna. He is extremely poor. He passes many a day without having anything to eat. He reads in the Gita these words of Krishna :

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

गीता ।

They who have dedicated their lives to me and worship me with their hearts entirely given up to contemplation of me, have not to take any care for their livelihood. I give them every thing that they need. *I bear the burden of their earthly life and livelihood.*

Gita, IX, 22.

Misra thinks that these words are not true. Has he not dedicated his life to Krishna ? Has he not to starve every now and then ? He cuts off with strokes of his pen the words :

योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ।

I bear the burden of their life and livelihood.

Misra has gone out for begging a handful, the next day. His wife is waiting for him. In the meantime two lovely boys come to his hut carrying two basketfuls of delicious viands on their head and lay them down at the feet of the astonished lady. Her heart melts to see that both the boys have cruel cuts and streaks of blood all over their bodies. She asks—who has wounded you thus, my children? They reply: 'Misra,' and saying this they disappear. Misra returns home and hears and understands everything. His eyes overflow with tears. His heart fills with pangs of remorse that he has rashly scored Krishna's words and has thereby inflicted wounds on his tender person. Over the strokes of pen he then writes thrice,

योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ।

Jaydev is writting his *Gita-Govinda*. He has come up to

स्मरगरल्लवण्डनं मम शिरसि मण्डनम् ।

and then he hesitates to write

देहि पदपद्ममुदारम् ।

Can he think, can he write that Krishna, the Highest and Holiest, is eager to touch the foot of Radha, to hold it on his head? Will it not be sacrilege? Is not Krishna the One adorable Ideal for all souls in the universe? He withholds his pen and goes to the river to bathe. In the meantime Krishna

comes to his house in the disguise of the poet himself, talks with his wife, eats the meal prepared for him, writes with his own hand the words

देहि पदपद्ममुदारम् ।

and vanishes. Jaydev comes home and is astonished to see the sport played by his beloved Lord.

A never-ceasing inspiration of divine love took profound possession of Lord Chaitanya's mind and heart. In this state he travelled, a solitary ascetic, for six years through the whole length and breadth of India. In course of his travels in Southern India, one day while bathing in the holy waters of the Godavary, he met Rai Ramananda, the chief minister of the renowned Pratap Rudra, King of Orissa, in the first quarter of the 16th century. Ramananda was deeply impressed by the remarkable appearance of Sri-Chaitanya illuminated with a supreme passion of celestial love. In compliance with Ramananda's earnest request the divine saint consented to give him company for a few days and accordingly stayed in the house of a pious Brahman adjacent to the minister's mansion. One afternoon as he was absorbed in a devout discourse with Sri-Chaitanya concerning the mysteries of the Vaishnava religion, Rai found, to his extreme surprise, that the natural brightness of Chaitanya's fair complexion and finely-moulded form became a lambent sphere of light. The radiance gradually took a distinct shape and shone as a charming

damsel, a golden image of heavenly beauty. Chaitanya was no longer his own self. What was beheld by Ramananda instead was a lovely cowboy, of a delicate blue complexion bedecked with a garland of flowers. He was full of wonder. His mind wandered in a bewilderment of conflicting thoughts and feelings. And then again he noticed the *Sannyasi's* figure of Chaitanya. He asked the saint why he saw that blissful vision. Chaitanya said it was an illusion and smiled. A sudden thought flashed through Rai's mind. He felt an illumination within, and said with a tremulous voice, "My lord, pray, don't deceive me; tell me what it is." Then in full possession of his natural consciousness and in bright broad daylight he beheld—what? the eternal embodiment of Love and Beauty, the *conjugate* figure divine of Radha and Krishna, the soul of all the mysteries of Being, and fell into a swoon.

There are thousands of reports of Krishna's personal appearance, his gracious dealings, his plays and pranks, his gifts and boons, how he yields to the power of love, how he watches every movement of his worshipper, how he comes to people's rescue when they are in perils and at times intervenes in their lives and raises them to heavenly fortunes, why no one knows.

He blesses Karama Bai, a Marwari lady by actually eating every day a simple country dish of rice and pulse boiled with spices and one or two

chillis, a preparation of the lady's own hand. One day she was late in offering the dish. It was found that the face of Krishna's image was smeared with traces of the food, the divine child having eaten it hastily on account of excessive hunger.

He favours a man named Ali-Bhagaban by arousing in him the consciousness of a girl in love and shows him a ring-figured dance of celestial damsels with Krishna. He plays with a Brahman named Govinda Goswami as a wanton boy, runs races with him, quarrels with him and pelts him with the wild fruits of a forest-plant.

There is no end to these accounts given and kept by earnest-minded men and women living perfectly holy lives. The best collection of them in simple but vivid verse is to be found in a Hindi Book named *Bhaktamal-Grantha* written by a Hindu-sthani Sadhu of the 17th century of which there is an excellent Bengali translation made not less than two hundred years ago by a Vaishnava poet named Krishnadas.

XI

LOVE AND WORSHIP

GOD has two aspects: He is Majesty and He is Love and Loveliness. As Majesty he is the absolute ruling power of the universe. He is *Iswar*, the supreme Lord of Earth and Heaven. A great man has many relations. He has a dear wife who loves him. He has his children who are fond of him. He has his friends who regard him with affection and treat him as their equal. He has those who revere him, look up to him with awe, sing lofty praises of his virtues and powers, show their high sense of honour by bendings of knees and bowings of heads from a great distance. Of these various dealings and feelings, which delights him, which attracts him most? Can his heart live on praises and honours only? For how many days and nights will he like to sit on his high chair in his outer chamber of state to receive reverent genuflectious, high-hearted encomiums, serene ceremonies of worship and fairly-framed flatteries. The religions of the world outside India have for thousands of years detained the Lord in

his gorgeous presence-chamber, burdening him with heaps of conventional honours and sanctimonious ceremonies of adoration. This is the *inhumanity* of doctrinal religion so to say. God is dying with impatience for the sweet company of his darlings, his beloved *wife* and children, is thirsting for their love and affection, is anxious to enjoy the confidences of his faithful friends. God cannot intend the whole of mankind to be his official employees and servants and menials or at best his *children* theologically constituted. Should he not have lady-loves, sweethearts, wives, parents, friends, comrades and children who are really children and not logical concepts.¹

The extra-Indian world of mankind with rare individual exceptions have always regarded themselves in their relation to God as abstract or formal children or subjects or servants or payers of compulsory tributes and have never dreamed of nearer or sweeter relations. The Hindus alone, and especially the Vaishnavas have sought to realise God and actually realised Him in all His aspects which it is possible for man to conceive. The Hindus through profound spiritual endeavours pursued for thousands of years forgetful of the advantages and amenities of the external physical world, have won religious positions nearest to God

¹ ये यथा मां प्रपद्यते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्तमानवर्तते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ।

among mankind, have been face to face and heart to heart with Him and have made discoveries of such subtle aspects of the divine character as appear to be strange whimsicalities of a wondering mind, or confounding enigmas or mystical cryptologies, if not frantic imaginings of a lunatic to the rest of mankind.

The Hindu sages freed their minds absolutely from all encrustations of intellectual customs, all dirty cobwebs of *spiritual* prejudice, all distortions and delusions and disturbances of sense, mine deep down to the innermost recesses of the soul shining in her eternal glory and sailed out with the illumination of this glory on the Atlantic ocean of spirit in quest of the enchanted island of God and found that God is Krishna and that all humanly-conceived Gods are fragmentary views of his infinite splendour. They came back to the world from their celestial voyage and declared to mankind the gospel of love called *Premabhakti*. It is simply this : Love Krishna and have ineffable and immortal happiness, that happiness which will melt down the bonds of worldly life, bring you supreme knowledge and power and solve you the riddle of being. How to love Krishna ? As the woman loves her husband or her paramour, as the father or the mother loves his or her child, as the friend loves his friend. That is, *love God humanly* and you will love Krishna. You do not know what divine love is. But you know the love

that an enamoured girl cherishes for her beloved. You have experience of the mother's and the father's love or the love of the friend. Offer this natural human love to Krishna. Do it sincerely that is with a whole heart. It will change its character ; it will gain in strength and depth ; it will clear itself of its sensuous dross ; it will purify you ; it will raise you to higher and higher planes of consciousness ; it will bring you illumination and at last free your spirit from the *sensual* wrappage which is the cause of your fleshly bondage called *sansar*.

Thus you begin with natural love, and end in love divine. You begin by loving God as a human being not forgetting that he is God. You will gradually cease to reason whether he is God or not. You will only know that he is your beloved and you will be absorbed in him. The consequence will be that you will have become an immortal angel glowing with divine love, and have not only realised but captivated God for ever, to love you and receive your love without end. This is Vaishnavism, but it is every one's religion, the only religion of the human soul. If you don't like to call Him by the name Krishna, give him any other name. There is no end to his names. But Krishna is the best name for God. Every Hindu name of God has a deep philosophy behind it. If a Mussalman is attracted towards God, knows him to be beautiful and full of love, loves him passionately and dedicates his life to him, he becomes a

Vaishnava, a worshipper of Krishna. Any Christian, any Jew, any Buddhist, if he adores God in this fashion will turn out to be a Vaishnava. The great Persian poets were all Vaishnavas. Shelley has been the greatest Vaishnava in the world outside India up to this time beside the man who conceived the *Song of Solomon*. When Browning speaks of

The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow,

he speaks Vaishnavism. He whose thirst for man's love is eternal and insatiable is Krishna. He seeks love and seeks to love with an ardent passion. This love is infinite in depth and immeasurable in breadth. Its intensity is inconceivable. Who is able to estimate the stupendous combustion that is eternally going on in the sun? That is the reflection of Krishna's love on the physical plane. Radha is the burning embodiment of this mighty passion. She is an inexhaustible fund of supra-natural electricity. One arrow-like ray of her scintillating emotion can pierce and fuse a mountain in a moment. Krishna sees that men love their relations but do not think of him for whom this love was brought into existence. Krishna's heart lusteth for this love that is scattered among those who cannot receive it. He appropriates this love to himself. He steals it, and he steals everything that is due to him, but which you forget to offer him. Krishna is therefore called the Thief. The sages who could discover the truth that God is a

Thief had a philosophy deeper than that of Hegel.
This is the meaning of

अहं हि सर्वज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।

गीता । ९ । २४ ।

Everything is God's in the universe. Everything naturally goes to him and rests in him. Both nature and arts are his; you use their products. You enjoy them. *You* enjoy? No; your souls. And your souls are immortal sparkles of Krishna's *superior nature* :

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥

गीता । ७ । ५ ।

But Krishna is Love. He yearns for the least expression of love that is intended for him. All things physical, mental and spiritual are his. He has them and gets them spontaneously. But it makes all the difference if *you* offer his own things to him. Because *that* will mean nothing and *this* will mean love, which he desires. That is his only want. The flowers in the king's garden all belong to the king. If some one plucks some of them, makes of them a wreath and offers it to the king, he is so happy to receive the present, because he finds a proof of love. The feelings of love that work within your mind are his. You give it to others. He receives it. But he is not happy in this. He wants that *you* give him this love and other things

for this love, for love has a thousand ways of expression. Let everything that you use in life be an offering presented to God first and then take it back as his *prasad*, that is, his gift of grace. Krishna says :

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

गीता । ९ । २६ ।

It may be a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a spoonful of water; offer it to him *out of love*. 'I enjoy this offering of love,' he says. This is the central principle of Hindu worship which is concrete and humanly divine, not blankly abstract or imaginative. Love deepens and perfects itself by external expressions of action. Otherwise it is apt to be vague and feeble.

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

गीता । ९ । २७ ।

Offer to me all that you accomplish, that which you enjoy, and that which you give in charity. Offer to me the religious rite that you perform and the pious austerity that you practise.

Gita, IX, 27.

This is the meaning of Hindu worship and this should be the ultimate purpose of every form of worship. According to the Hindu Scriptures there is no gulf of difference between life and worship.

The programme of the Hindu's daily life is a sort of introduction to or the outer fringe of his divine worship. The Hindu worship is no extraneous duty super-added to the general course of his life. It is an organic part of his life, the central element, shaping and colouring the rest.

XII

KRISHNA AND THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

I WILL take up one more question and finish. It is maintained by many that there is no Krishna in the Vedas and the Upanishads. When this is taken for granted, it is easy to affirm that Krishna is a poetical conception, an imaginative creation of the later Pauranic literature. It is a fact that the name of Krishna is not mentioned in the earlier Upanishads, those commented on by Sankaracharyya. But in the Rigveda-Sanhita there is reference to Krishna being born of Devaki in prison and to some incidents of his life. Besides, in the Atharva-veda there is a mantra which tells us how Krishna as Vaman took three gigantic steps by which he covered the earth, heaven and the nether world. But we may not attach any importance to this. That the Vedas do not tell us anything of Krishna is, however, no justification for the statement that he is the creation of some poetical imagination. But let us admit that Krishna is

born of human imagination. What then? Krishna has a deeper and wider position in the Puranas, a more pervading influence in the Pauranic universe than Brahma in the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Krishna of the Puranas has a vast and concrete content of life. He fills a large space of the external world besides his ever-expanding presence in the internal. He is absolute Brahma and divine Man both. The Brahma of the Upanishads becoming more intimately and intensely realised appears as Krishna in the Puranas. There is no room for a new creation of imagination. If Krishna be imagination, Brahma too is imagination in a greater degree. And what are the Gods of the Religions, of Christianity and Islam? If Krishna be imagination, the Gods will fare no better, for Krishna in Hinduism is far more than what the Gods are in these religions. If God be no imaginative creation in any religion, Krishna can never be such. But God is indeed imagination and nothing but imagination, for imagination is illumination or divine insight and the highest spiritual life is of imagination all compact. In the higher planes of illuminated consciousness reason, intellect, understanding, thought and perception all melt into imagination and imagination assumes the forms of all these. In these regions imagination is supreme vision or *Divyajnan*. God becomes known and visible to the eye of this imagination. When Krishna says,

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।

दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥

गीता । ११ । ८ ।

It is impossible for you to see Me with the eyes which are your own: I am endowing you with a spiritual insight. You see my divine power which is beyond the comprehension of all knowledge.

Gita, XI, 8.

This is the meaning of *imagination*. God is *realised* through supreme imagination and may be said to be a creation of imagination in this sense. Krishna is imagination and he is God nevertheless. The Vedas and the Upanishads cannot give us God as Krishna. Krishna cannot manifest himself to that state of consciousness which underlies the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is a momentous consideration, and will disperse the cloud of many a doubt overcasting the mind about the authenticity, so to say, of Krishna's existence, life and work.

Krishna is eternal divinity. Time and Space cannot confine him. He is above all conditions :

तुरीयं कृष्णते नाहि मायाय सम्बन्ध ।

Krishna is transcendental: Maya can never touch him.

Chaitanyacharitamrita.

He is the final basis of existence. As Air cannot exist without the sky, so the universe cannot exist without Krishna. The boundless

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blue sky that we see is a dim reflection of the living Blue called Krishna :

आकाशशरीरं ब्रह्म सत्यात्मा प्राणारामम् ।

मन आनन्दनं शान्तिः समृद्धिरमृतम् ॥

तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत्

The Sky is the visible Body of Brahma. He is Truth, he is Soul; he is Joy to the heart; he delights the mind. He is Peace, he is Prosperity, he is Immortality.

Taittiriyaopanishat.

The Blue of Krishna is Eternity. The question is about his manifestation or unmanifestation. To talk of the proof of his existence is childish. The Vedas and the Upanishads represent a state of human consciousness which cannot bring in the manifestation of Krishna. It is the age of the living consciousness of Brahma, the infinite, eternal, *formless*, indistinguishable, incomprehensible and immeasurable Divine Existence, which has no attribute and which cannot be spoken of in terms of human intelligence. Brahma is that stupendous and overflowing Aspect of God in which the oceans and the mountains and the worlds and the suns are fused and merged :

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकम् ।

नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ॥

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वम् ।

तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

कठश्रुति ।

There the Sun does never shine ; nor the moon,
nor brightest stars ; The lightning flashes are
never seen ; The burning Fire is brought to nought ;
He alone does shine and all that shines, shineth
in His shining rays. He illumines with His
splendid Light all that we see on earth around.

Kathopanishat.

In the Upanishads we see that a universal
endeavour is going on to realise Brahma in every-
thing that exists, the elements, the stars, the sun,
the moon, the seasons, the seas, mountains, lakes,
rivers, clouds, winds, trees, plants, flowers, birds,
insects, every human thought, every human
feeling, every word, every action :

नीलः पतङ्गो हरितो लोहिताक्षस्तारिद्रर्भक्तवः समुद्राः ।

अनादिमत्त्वं विभुत्वेन वर्तसे यतो जातानि भूवनानि विश्वाः ।

श्वेताश्वतरश्रुतिः ।

Thou flutterest as the butterfly, blue and fair ;
As ruddy-eyed green-feathered parrot thou fliest
free ;
In cloud thou flashest quick in restless lightn-
ing glare ;
Thou changest in the seasons, swinging as the
blue-black sea ;
Thou hast no end, no beginning, pervadest all
that's there ;
The universe with its multiform worlds has
sprung from thee.

Swetaswataropanishat.

There is the immeasurable ocean of Brahma, ever
full, ever at the spring tide. Everything that exists
is a tremor, a ripple of this ocean. Brahma is an
endless expansion of Lightning-Light :

दीप्तानलार्कद्युतिमप्रमेयम् ।

All that exist are refracted rays of this boundless splendour. Brahma is an all-comprehensive consciousness of an ineffable profundity of Joy everlasting :

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म ।

The individual minds are atomic sparkles of this huge Consciousness. The differences of forms and attributes, the *Nam-rupê* are due to an Illusion which vanishes the moment that the fumeless flame of the soul is unfolded to shed its brilliance on it. The rishis are striking all things with the quivering rays of their enkindled spirits and thus transfusing them to their extreme substance which is Brahma.

लोकेषु पंचविधं सामोपासीत् । पृथिवी हिंकारोऽग्निः प्रस्तावोऽन्तरीक्ष-
मुद्रीथं आदित्यः प्रतीहारो द्यौनिधनमित्यूद्धेषु । ऋष्टौ पंचविधं सामोपासीत्
सर्वासु अप्सु पंचविधं सामोपासीत् । पशुसु पंचविधं सामोपासीत् । प्राणेषु
पंचविधं सामोपासीत् ।

छान्दोग्योपनिषत्

The Vedas and the highest of them the Sam-Veda are to be worshipped as Brahma. This Veda-Brahma or the Word that is God is to be realised everywhere in the universe—in the Earth, in Fire, in the Sky, in the Sun, in the Heavens, in the Rains, in the Waters, in the Seasons, in the beasts and in the five vital forces, the *Pranas*.

Chhandogyopanishat.

These wonderful men are *knowing* Brahma, *feeling* Brahma and *willing* nothing but Brahma in their life. Brahma is *amrita*, that is immortality,

that is ambrosia or manna, eternal *enjoyment* for the soul. The sages discover that the universe is an ocean of *amrita*, a flowing flood of ambrosia. They not only drink it, but swim, sink and die in it to become immortal.

अथ येऽस्य प्रत्यंचो रश्मयस्ता एवास्य प्रतीच्यो मधुनाब्जः ।
सामान्येव मधुकृतः । सामवेद एव पुष्पं ता अमृता आपः ।

छान्दोग्योपनिषत्

The western rays of the sun are its western veins and cells of honey. The *Sam-mantras* are the honey-bees. The rites enjoined by the *Samveda* are flowers and the sweet soma-liquors offered at sacrifice are *amrita*.

Chhandogyopanishat.

This is about the Sun, and so everywhere.

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविर्ब्रह्मामौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं प्रद्वक्मसमाधिना ॥

गीता । ४ । २४ ।

The vessels used at sacrifice are Brahma ; the clarified butter is Brahma ; the fire into which this is poured is Brahma ; the priest who performs the sacrifice is Brahma ; *Karma* or holy action is Brahma and he who is devoted to this passes into Brahma.

Gita, IV, 24.

All human consciousness in this age is illuminated with divine light and inspired with divine ecstasy. The divine splendour is flowing in flooding tides over the endless world of man's Mind. The heart is melting into the universe and the universe

is melting into the heart. The distinctions of the inner and the outer, of mental and material, of psychical and physical, are all obliterated. All is spirit, all is electricity. Everything is force and force is thought and thought is joy. Matter becomes spirit and spirit becomes matter. Inter-transfusion is the universal order. Everything is flowing into every other thing. Streams of super-sensuous pleasures are all that exist.

मधुदाता ऋतायते, मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः, माध्वी नः सन्त्वोषधीः ।

मधुनक्तुतोषसो मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिः ।

श्रुति ।

The winds that blow are all honey. The rivers that flow are streams of honey. Let the herbs be nothing but honey for us. The night and the dawn are full of honey. The dust of the earth too is honey. The forest-trees are made of honey.'

The day dawns at the end of the night bringing in with it plenteous presents of ambrosial love and rapture and beauty. The bright-plumed birds do warble in the woodland and their sweet and soft melodies scatter showers of joy around. Liquid ripples of beauty and happiness quiver in every creeping plant, and every leaf and every flower as they toss at the touch of the amorous breeze. And all this is there not in poetical imagination but in easy and spontaneous perception. Indra, Agni, Mitra, Varuna, Vayu, Rudra, the Vasus, the

¹ Honey = Ambrosial emotion of celestial joy.

Viswa-devas, Vrihaspati, Aryyama, Twashta, Pusha and other gods are floating about like wandering islands on the vast and ever-expanding Brahma-consciousness and vanishing and coming into view again. They are both *arup* and *sarup*, with visible forms and invisible too.

This is the universe of Brahma realised universally only once and in one country alone in the history of human life. *No manifestation of Krishna is possible in this circumstance.* But a time came when this overflowing tide of divine Consciousness slowly ebbed away. Mist and fog arose and mixed with the rapturous Illumination. The liquidly flowing minds passed through a process of hardening and became isolated individuals with the sense of mine and thine and aware of *selfish* purposes. The supreme feeling of

I have no sorrow, no pleasure of my own ; I belong to others : I become whatsoever I look at. The sun shines, and the stars shine and I shine with them. My songs are theirs and theirs are mine. We are travelling to the same country. I bloom with the flower and dance with the creeper. With the breeze I hover about the fragrant flower.

Rabindranath Tagore.

was no more. The domination of Maya began. Selfish thought, selfish feeling, and selfish action gradually directed the workings of the mind into fixed and narrowly limited lines. Sorrows and sufferings multiplied. Universal love gave way to

¹ Literally translated from the original Bengali.

personal love of individual relations. Passions and sentiments came into prominence. Mists and clouds overhung the sky but there was of course the sunshiny influence of the pure spirit divine in Man, the essential character of which is love.

Since then has there been often seen,
The murky mist or sunny sheen.¹

Yea, and on rare occasions and at auspicious moments, who knows by what law it was, the cloud came into intimate connection with the sunshine and lo! the resplendent rainbow is shining there! The white radiance of the sun has assumed the seven-coloured loveliness of the beautiful Iris. *That is Krishna*. The unthinkable and unimaginable Brahma thus assumes form and figure and beauty and colour and grace and we have Krishna. When the soul is selfish and *sensish* there is no Brahma, no Krishna, no God. When the illusory mould of self falls away and an access of impersonal joy divine suffuses and fuses her and resolves her into the Infinite, *there is Brahma*. When the soul retains her distinct personality intact, knows no one but a personal Deity of infinite *attraction* and burns with an irresistible desire to embrace him and gives herself up to him with a glowing outflow of passion, *there is Krishna*. When the natural human love in its highest degree of intensity transcends its sensuous ring of muffling fume and is elevated to a divine plane Krishna is compelled

¹ Translated from the original Bengali.

and also enraptured to yield himself to the embrace of the soul.

The Upanishads make up one extreme, that of impersonal, indefinable, divine consciousness. There is no Krishna in it. The other extreme is the so-called natural literature, that is the sensuous literature of the modern world in its three divisions of (1) the sensuous proper like the poems of Byron, (2) the moral like Pope's *Essay on Man* and Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and (3) the spiritual like many of the poems of Browning, and especially the works of men like Tolstoy, Maeterlinck and Roman Roland, the so called *spiritual* writers of Europe. There is no Krishna, no Brahma, no God in these, unless we regard the intellectual or imaginative mass of adumbrations and the seemingly serious sentimentalities which are the common features of the present day spiritualists of Europe, as divinity or divine love. Between these two extremes are the Puranas which represent the personal divine consciousness of humanity with love (*ananda-chinmaya-rasa*) as its dominant character, as struggling through hostile forces of sense and the sense-created world and rising up to and entering into the infinite universe of divine love and beauty. Krishna is here and therefore Brahma and God and spirit and all. Thus we understand why Krishna is absent from the realm of the Upanishads and lives and moves and loves men and women and boys and girls in the world of the Puranas.

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Let us contemplate and vision a living picture of Krishna and bring our discourse to a close :

नवीननीरदश्यामं नीलेन्दीवरलोचनम् ।

दल्लवीनन्दनं वन्दे कृष्णं गोपालरूपिणम् ॥

स्मूरद्रुहदलोद्वजनीलकुंचितमूर्द्धजम् ।

कदम्बकुसुमोद्भवमालाविभूषितम् ।

गण्डमण्डलसंसर्गिचलत्कांचनकुण्डलम् ।

स्थूलमुक्ताफलोदारहारघोतितवक्षसम् ।

रुचिरौष्ठपुटन्यस्तवंशीमधुरनिस्वनैः ।

लसद्गोपालिकाचेतोमोहयन्तं मुहुर्मुहुः ।

वसन्तकुसुमामोदसुरभीकृतदिङ्मुखं ।

गोवर्धनगिरौ रम्ये स्थितं रासरसोत्सुकम् ।

नमस्ते विश्वरूपाय विश्वस्थित्यन्तहेतवे ।

विश्वेश्वराय विश्वाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ।

नमोविज्ञानरूपाय परमानन्दरूपिणे ।

कृष्णाय गोपीनाथाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ।

Glory to thee, Krishna, whose complexion is fresh deep-blue like that of the bluest cloud and whose eyes are like two tender petals of a bright-blue lotus. It has been thy pleasure to assume the form of a playful cow-boy, the beloved child of a loving milkmaid, the child that tends millions of cows. The black curling locks of thy shapely head are done up into a handsome crest nicely bound with a diadem of bright peacock-plumes. Thou hast gracefully swinging on thine emerald breast a garland of fresh-blown forest-flowers of various hues. Exquisite ornaments of the best

pearls and diamonds and other rich jewels are sparkling on thy person reflecting its lambent radiance. There is a fine flute gently touching thy finely-chiselled lips. Thou art playing on it sweet melodious tunes and fascinating the loving hearts of the lovely milk-maidens and making them forget their homes and themselves. Thou art engaged in sports of the sweetest love on a delightful dale redolent with perfumes of delicate-petalled flowers blooming around at the touch of the amorous spring and maddening the winds with their fragrant breath. Let us bow down to thee, Krishna ! The universe is a shadow of thine. Thou art the cause of the birth and the life and the death of the universe. Thou art the Lord of the universe. Thou art the All and the Whole. Thou pervadest the earth and the heavens and all celestial spheres. Thou art perfect Intelligence and supreme Happiness everlasting. Thou art Krishna, Thou art the Master of the Souls. Thy name is Krishna. Glory be to thee and to thy name for ever and ever.

APPENDIX

THE barest outline of Krishna's eventful *avatar*-life on earth is this :

Krishna was born in a prison-house in Mathura. Here his parents Vasudev and Devaki were kept in captivity by Kansa, Devaki's own brother, a tyrant king. An Oracle told him that he would be killed by a Son of Devaki. Devaki gave birth to seven children in succession. They were all slain by the cruel king as soon as they were born. It was a dark night. A violent storm was raging. Lightning flashed and thunder roared. A terrible tumult took the earth and sky. Krishna was born in the prison in the midst of these. A deep sleep overpowered the sentinels. The heavy iron-doors opened of themselves. Vasudev took the radiant child in his arms, crossed the Jamuna at a ford, went to Gokul, left the child in the care of Nanda, a cousin of his, and a rich landholder, to be nursed by Jasoda, his wife, and came back to his captivity.

Krishna's early life was spent here. As he grew up he became an object of love, a source of joy, and a centre of attraction to the boys and girls and the young and old of Brindaban. Kansa thought that

some deception must have been practised upon him, when he was informed by a mysterious voice that his enemy was living in Brindaban. He would have no rest until he could destroy the enemy. Many a design, many a guile and many a trick he tried to put an end to the existence of Krishna. As a consequence his life became a continuous series of perilous adventures and astonishing incidents. Krishna's wonderful heroism stands forth brilliantly in the performance of these enterprises both in a human and divine way. He killed, one after another, many demons who came as Kansa's agents to do him harm or take his life. They sought to execute their wicked end in many uncanny ways, in many incomprehensible shapes and disguises, as a mad bull, as a horrible heron, as a furious whirlwind, as a forest-fire. On one occasion he forbade the people of Brindaban to hold an annual festival, a religious ceremony in honour of Indra. The mighty god took offence and wanted to chastise them by sending in upon the country a destructive tempest. Krishna broke the force of the tempest and dispersed it with an exertion of his indomitable will and made the people see him holding Mount Gobardhan up as an umbrella over the country and thus giving protection to all against the elemental rage. There was a huge hydra-headed Reptile in a deep and dismal pit not far from the Jamuna. One day Krishna bounded down into the pit, stood on the angry head of the serpent,

crushed it with kicks and robbed it of its deleterious power.

This is one aspect of his life, Krishna as power. He is love and beauty as much as he is power. He turned the country into a land of love, friendship, beauty, joy and play. All hearts moved round and round about him as bees about a honeyed flower. Every blooming maiden found in him the fulfilment of all her desire. Boys felt that nothing was happier than to play with him. With them as his beloved companions he used to ramble through the flowery groves of Brindaban leaving his cows and calves to pasture at large on extensive plains of grass. Endless were their sports and pranks and the woodland resounded with their ringing shouts of joy. No one knew what magic was there in the flute that Krishna ever carried about him and played on whenever he pleased. The delightful notes which flowed from it charmed man and beast and plant alike. Krishna made the whole of Brindaban and the pastoral country round about into a land of everlasting joy and jubilation, and of love and loveliness.

But still it did not last for ever so far as it was a human state though divine and hence eternal beyond the view. A call came from King Kansa. Krishna would not decline it. He went to Mathura where they were holding a grand tournament in which Krishna was to show his skill and courage. The brilliant light of joy all disappeared from the

face of Brindaban and saddening shadows took its place. The darling of the damsels of Gokul appeared as an undaunted hero in Mathura, one who could kill a terrible elephant with a blow dealt with an easy fist. He slew two generals of Kansa in wrestling matches. Kansa could not contain his wrath and wanted to teach the crafty Boy a capital lesson. Krishna was forced to fight a duel with the raging tyrant. With his gigantic figure and huge limbs as of adamant he looked like a mountain, while Krishna was yet a boy growing to youthfulness with a tender body made as if of delicate flowers. The heart of every spectator was tense with a quivering emotion which was keen curiosity as much as affectionate pity for the daring youth. But to the utter amazement of all Krishna threw the storming King down in no time, planted his knee on his breast and clutched his throat with such crushing force that when he rose from him it was all over with the King.

He hastened to the prison where his parents were pining for years and years, released them and really restored them to life and joy. He placed on the throne Ugrasen, his maternal grandfather, whom his son Kansa maltreated for long. He established order and peace in the kingdom and the subjects were happy after a long time. At Mathura he found himself glared at by many enemies the ruling princes of provinces far and near.

Jarasandha, the King of Magadha, was the most powerful of these adversaries. For the time being he left them to their malicious designs and proceeded to Dwaraka, the residential seat of his nearest kinsmen. There he founded a kingdom and built a splendidly fortified palace commanding a beautiful sea-side prospect. The princess of Bidarva wrote him a letter offering him her love and herself and beseeching him to rescue her from the grasp of the prince chosen to be her husband against her will. Krishna brought her to Dwaraka after having defeated a host of ruling chiefs who closed round him as he was lifting her up on a chariot. Her name was Rukmini, the most loving and the most beloved of Krishna's queens. Krishna was multifariously active and peerlessly powerful about this time. He fought with Indra and forced him to surrender the celestial flower, *Parijat*. He slew a mighty demon named Narak. He entered into fierce hostilities with Bâna, the King of Sonitpur, in connection with a secret amour of Aniruddha, Krishna's grandson, with the King's daughter, for which he was made a captive. Krishna subdued Bâna and set Aniruddha free to whom Ushâ the King's daughter was given in marriage.

Now it was time for Krishna to turn his attention to Hastinapur and to interfere in the affairs of the Pandavas who were his cousins. Their disputes with the Kauravas concerning the title to the

throne were becoming darker day by day. Krishna tried some sort of amicable settlement, but the sons of Dhritarashtra were inexorable. He took a broad survey of the political conditions of India, and found nothing but strife and struggle, and iniquity and vice. The disease was not on the surface. It rankled deep within. A thirst for blood showed itself everywhere. War was inevitable. Krishna scanned everything and thought it best to concentrate the belligerent forces instead of allowing them to break up into any number of bloody conflicts causing thereby the greater harm to the afflicted country. With this end in view he managed the matters so that the ruling powers all got themselves arrayed on either of the two sides, Pandavas and Kauravas, who formed the central core of contest and then there commenced the tremendous conflict in which destruction of human life assumed such indescribable magnitudes as have never been equalled in the history of mankind. Evil set against evil destroyed one another. Vice eradicated vice. Passion murdered passion. It was thus that the wide-spread disease was cured.

Before this Titanic strife Krishna defeated and killed either with his own hand or through the agency of some of the Pandavas such inveterate enemies to truth and justice as Jarasandha and Sisupal. A few more that still remained were sacrificed on the occasion of the *Aswamedha* ceremony of the Pandavas. On the pretext of teaching

Arjun Krishna taught all mankind the deepest mysteries of religion and the highest of human philosophy showing how to work every life out to the greatest consummation, how to attain to eternal happiness and how to turn any profession, any occupation to a divine account. He paved the way thus for the establishment of a kingdom of truth and righteousness with Judhisthira, the most virtuous of men, at its centre.

In the midst of these tumultuous troubles of politics and war Krishna did not forget his beloved Brindaban, the sweet reminiscences of which would often blow through his mind like fragrant breezes of spring filling it with restless longings for a return to that blissful life. But in his deep consciousness of the spiritual æsthetics of human life he felt that it was not to be. In the meantime internal troubles arose in his own court at Dwaraka. His numerous sons and grandsons fell away from the paths of truth and virtue and betook themselves to unseemly contentions among themselves which reached such an ungainly state that at last they drifted into bloody feuds and destroyed one another. A great sorrow fell on his heart eclipsing all the rays of his life. He thought it was time for the wind-up of his Lila-life, the termination of his ministrations. One day he sat, sunk in reverie, on a low branch of a big banyan tree, with his finely-formed legs fairly suspending a little above the ground. A professional hunter caught a glimpse of a foot

from a distance through a straggling thicket, thought it to be the ear of a stag and shot an arrow which gave it a mortal wound. The unfortunate hunter came nearer and was struck with unspeakable grief when he found what he had done. Krishna consoled the man who dealt him the death-wound saying, 'You need not regret. It was destined that you should do this. I killed your father in another life.' His voice faltered, he put off his human garb and resumed his Divinity.



CATALOGUED.